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THE *K.*
GENERAL ELECTION.

1801
A
SERIES OF LETTERS
CHIEFLY BETWEEN
TWO FEMALE FRIENDS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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THE
GENERAL ELECTION.

LETTER I.

MISS FIELDING TO MISS SIDNEY.

IT is as I suspected—I am torn from your family, for the purpose of composing domestic feuds, and curtailed of my enjoyments, in order, if possible, to repair the ravages of party phrenzy.

Reasonable this you will say—Yet pray, my dear, observe these men—Our little disputations on the merits of fashion, and the etiquette of precedence,
VOL. I. B dency,

dency, are so many standing dishes of ridicule with them, at the same time that they do not hesitate to sacrifice whatever is most dear and valuable on the altar of popular opinion and popular enthusiasm.

Happy is it for me, that my education has been a kind of philosophic one. Called early to the melancholy office of closing a dear and amiable mother's eyes, and almost immediately afterwards robbed of the tender protection of a second mother in my aunt, by a severe attack of the palsy, which, though it did not deprive her of life, totally suspended her intellectual faculties, I was compelled to seek resources in myself, to support me under such keen, such irretrievable calamities.

Yet let me not fail to remember that heaven, in the moment of its seeming desertion of me, gave me
the

the blessing of your friendship—Soft pity and an irresistible impulse were its basis; generous solicitude and genuine gratitude its strong cement; nor can I doubt but it will abide the pelt-ing of every change and chance in human existence, and render us as firmly united at fourscore as we were at fourteen years of age: for to heart-felt friendship, the summer or winter, the prosperity or adversity of life, are only so many accidents, which contribute the more abundantly to endear the beloved individual. This is indeed my grand barrier against murmuring, for having counted over my riches in the possession of your esteem, I dare not complain of my poverty in any other particular, or refuse the chearful execution of whatever task appears to me a just tax for being so happy.

My uncle, on my alighting, presented himself.—Sophia, said he, offer-

ing me his hand with his usual cordiality, your infatuated father has provided you new cause for mortification—he will needs set up your brother for the little borough of Piddleton in opposition to me his near relation, although he knows I will neither spare industry or expence to carry my point.

I, Sir, have many reasons to be concerned at my father's conduct: for besides the family dissatisfactions it is productive of, I much fear, heaven is my witness, for his sake, not my own, that his fortune is too great a sufferer by his party contentions, for his future repose.

Sufferer! Believe me, child, he is on the eve of actual beggary—But come, no tears, he does not deserve them—It is true, abstracted from his hot-headed notions of politics, I love him as never brother loved brother; but should he ruin himself on that ground,

ground, he shall die in a jail before I will advance a single six-pence in his favour. You and Henry shall nevertheless share my whole possessions.

And can you, Sir, believe—

Not a word, I charge you, Sophia, on pain of my displeasure, in his exculpation—No human address can exculpate him—You may prove yourself a good child, without being a mad woman—However, to shew you I love liberty too well to deny any one a choice, I will leave you a choice even in this instance—Should your father, therefore, get himself into prison, you shall either starve with him there, or accept a provision on my terms.

It was in vain to oppose so powerful a torrent of dishumour, and I resolved to turn all the artillery of my little eloquence against the weak side of my father's character; for such

is the peculiar composition of his soul, though its fire is ever more precipitating him into the wrong, its benevolence ever lays him open to repentance and a desire of regaining the right: the great misfortune is, that these rational fits are too temporary in general for the desired purpose.

Henry is much your humble servant, in return for your kind remembrance of him: Poor fellow! how you would pity him if you beheld his present distrets! Public life is his aversion, yet is he to be forced upon it with the additional mortification of offending the man he loves. I am, however, much mistaken if this proves the greatest difficulty he will have to contend with.—But why, you will ask me, ride out to meet evils, when so many pay me such unsought-for visits?

Not magic itself is more mysterious to me than politics. To please
my

my father and uncle, all unqualified as female intellects are deemed for such deep researches, have I turned over every system of public faith, and every record of popular transactions; and the result is, that I find speculative government a very easy, practical a very arduous task; and that the greatest men out of office have a knack of becoming the least when in office, and *vice versa* to the end of the chapter. But though I pronounce so decisively on the absurdity, the inconsistency, nay the knavery, of our politicians, and perceive what molten calves most sovereigns may be considered—yet as subordination is the vitals of society, and politicians, for the double purpose of amusing the ignorant and checking the daring, are necessary evils, I secretly wish all sovereigns the plain sense of good queen Bess—who convinced that majesty was a creature of the public creation, limited in its capacity

for judging, and circumscribed in its powers of acting, took that certain method of supplying all regal deficiencies—choosing able and honest counsellors. Her men in office had, we read, their enemies as well as our cotemporary statesmen: whisperings accordingly reached the ear of royalty; but Bess did not examine their merits by deputy, and was therefore secure from every possibility of deception—By their actions she tried them, and by their actions acquitted or condemned them; and the event proved the good policy of her conduct. Every private individual, as in this our day, nevertheless, during her reign governed the realm by their own fire side; struck out the imperfections, and introduced wise regulations into the constitution—But their labours ended where they began, and as the morals of the gross of the people were uncorrupted, their suffrages were not as
now

TO MISS SIDNEY.

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now prostituted, nor their great privilege of representation bartered for pecuniary grants.—Alas! my dear Emma, how is that proverb verified in my practice, which says, that out of the abundance of the heart, &c. My faculties are as it were absorbed by this single subject, and my literary conversation as naturally turns upon it, as yours would on the tranquil delights of your situation—But may those delights be multiplied on your head, in proportion as my mortifications are augmented, and I will never call myself,

Your unhappy,

S. F.

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LET-

L E T T E R II.

MISS SIDNEY TO MISS FIELDING.

WERE it not for the disagreeable share you are compelled to take in the farce, how should I laugh at the bare idea of your father and uncle's present employment! Your doors thrown open indiscriminately to all comers; your table filled with heterogeneous guests; and the rude joke so abundantly encouraged, that you can scarce believe yourself under the paternal roof. Nor would my imagination stop there, but pursue these shatter-brained relations through all the dirty work it is an established custom for your candidates to submit to; such as seizing every greasy fist that comes in their way, the familiar gripe having been often found a powerful bribe; and approaching every
frightful

frightful old woman in the parish as so many goddesses, in order to obtain the favour of a salute. Do, laugh with me, my sweet girl; for laugh you must, when you consider this as a just picture of the glorious hinges on which our boasted constitution turns, of the bulwark of our inestimable liberties. Thus do we find the many dupes of the few, and selling themselves and their posterity, for the participation of a fat ox and an hoghead of ale, in conjunction with the considerations already described, and certain douceurs which shall be nameless. Yet, Sophia, on recollection, I fear I am a wicked wretch; for is not this periodical levelling of distinctions a living copy of the Roman, what do you call it, slaves holiday, with this difference, that their festival was annual, ours septennial, except in cases of accidental vacancy? But it is surely astonishing, though a body of

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slaves,

slaves, on the expiration of the appointed period, return to their tasks, and submit their backs to the stripes of the task-master, that the sons of freedom, the brave, the hardy, the self-dependent Britons, can suffer themselves to be caught a second time in the trap of polite finesse, and self-interested complaisance.—The very man who, a month or two before, was cringing for a suffrage, has been known to vote in favour of laws which struck at the best interests of his constituents, (as witness, the cyder, the porter, the inclosure acts, &c. &c. within our immediate memory) nay been publicly known to ridicule their instructions, and spurn at their remonstrances.—Yet, let the time once come round, and the smile again betrays, the feast is again successful, and the ready extended palm receives its desired reward—and so run on our political revolutions : so that it may with
great

great truth be said, that never were people so well satisfied, and so grossly abused as the English.

Having taken this view of facts, I own I never fail to honour the men for their exclusion of us from their party-play game.—We are, I confess, volatile creatures, but Heaven has endowed us with a strength of discernment that would ill suit with the solemn tricks which pass current in these public matters; as a proof of which assertion, I only ask you to produce me one man, who by his own undoing ever essentially served his country, except indeed you step back to the Romans, and point me out their Decius, and their Curtius, the phænomens though, take notice, of their days—But enough of these two-legged apes for the present.

And so the gentle Henry is hard set what course to take?—I could advise
him

him—With that very elegant figure and finely accomplished mind, methinks were I he, I should be tempted to become a very different candidate than a political one.—But then his delicacy—name it not I beseech you—he has family, education, great merit and great expectancies to recommend him; and should he unfortunately fail in the last article, let me tell you, the woman that could conceive him under obligations to her, because he participated her possessions, does not deserve to possess such a heart as his.

Illiberal Sophia!—can you imagine that in order to do justice to your brother, I have violated the fairest virtue in the female character?—But I despise the insinuating smile too much to take other notice of it than, by observing that I have heard you speak in the highest terms of a relation of mine, without ever once suspecting you
of

of what is called a soft partiality for him.

But if Henry cannot break down those strong holds of pride, which you, his sister, miscall delicacy, that would restrain him from revenging himself on fortune in the matrimonial way : why not seek an establishment at court, by means of some of your father's right honourable friends ? I am indeed well aware that he is as ill qualified for a levee hunter, as he has proved himself for the tool of a party : but as the meeting of parliament will, for the good of his country, infallibly draw your father to the metropolis, and as his opinion and his son's are so widely different, from the servility and patient endurance court attendances require, why might he not do all the needful that way, and like a generous father let Henry reap the benefit ? The more I revolve this suggestion in my mind (I now speak seriously)

riously) the more eligible it appears. An act of disobedience of so deep a dye as refusing to take the representation now offered him upon his shoulders, will, I can conceive, banish him from the paternal roof; but nature I suppose will not be banished the paternal breast.—Your brother has been bred to no profession. The army would ill suit his turn of mind: he has *too much religion* I am convinced to be a parson; and his principles are far too nice to allow him to make a figure at the bar. What avenue then is open to him but a place under the government, that whilst it leaves him his freedom of choice, his election of conduct, may prove a provision for those earthly wants from which none but absolute angels are exempt.—I advise you to improve the hint, and do honour to your friend's invention.

Your

Your saucy fellows hold scolding a salutary exercise of the female lungs—What happy periods ought not then elections to be deemed, which circulate the spleen, and give vent to the ill humours in both sexes throughout whole counties! I remember in my grandfather's life-time (though quite a child) I was once fearfully insulted by the adverse party: nay, the coach which was to convey us from town, happening to stand some time in the street, the very horses were beset with grievous hissings, to the unspeakable triumph of the zealous populace. Good neighbourhood receives its shock: females, the softer sex, as by way of compliment I presume we are called, descend to distinguish themselves in the cause of their country; and, in the true electioneering style, beslay their *quondam* companions, if of an opposite faith to their own. I own such is the wickedness of my composition,
that

that I am ever a delighted spectator of these lady-like scenes, only congratulating myself that no friend of mine has an active part therein. The males shew their resentment by disdaining to hunt for a whole succeeding year with their dissenting neighbour, nor for a still longer period can be brought to quaff the enlivening bowl under a cloud of sociality raised by their mutual industry. On this subject, which so nearly resembles small talk, I write, as your Latin folks phrase it, *currenti calamo*, and could cover whole sheets of paper with any thing, but to the purpose.

Ah! that my fair country-women could but prevail on themselves to emulate the Spartan dames, as we have them described by Marmontel, so amiably reserved, so sensibly silent.—Yet, Sophia, it is possible these Spartans might have an interest in following king Solomon's advice, from being
interested

interested in his sage observation; *viz.* that “a fool, when silent, is counted “wise.” If so, I honour the British ladies for their propensity to chattering; for, what woman of spirit could bear to have her virtues so mortifyingly misconstrued? We pique ourselves, if I mistake not, on our illustrious descent, and, in the pride of our hearts, claim the Romans for our ancestors.—But how unlike that noble-minded race! for, not a single intimation does their history contain of absurd contests among the women, though many of their spirited unanimity; or of masculine riots, resulting from successive butts of beer set a-broach in their market-places, in order to influence the public voice; though we read much of their resolute stands in the cause of their liberty.—But indeed no other merits were accepted in the characters of the Roman candidates, than their valour as generals,

rals, or their wisdom as legislators, or their something of a similar nature that dignified the man and did honour to the popular voice. With us, the boasted offspring of these sons of freedom and good sense, the case is, in truth, widely different—for no sooner does the canvassing commence than rude contention and idle clamour is the consequence. The qualifications of the candidates are measured wholly by their liberality, and he who enables them to drink deepest is sure to be proclaimed the best man. But let us for a moment stop these inconsiderate partizans with an enquiry into their future expectations ; for, is it not reasonable to conclude, that he who throws out baits to a misjudging multitude, has himself a venal soul ?

The purpose for which a candidate professes to solicit the public suffrages, is to render himself serviceable to his country in general, but in
a more

a more particular manner to that country whose representative he has the honour to be constituted. In order to execute so important a task, he must well understand its nature and end; how far the universal and the limited good are dependent or unconnected (if I may so express myself) with each other—He must be acquainted with the manufactures, products, natural and civil constitution of the county for which he is chosen member, so as to be able on the instant to ascertain how this bill would affect the balance of power with respect to the landed interest, and that strike at the deserved prosperity of the commercial; but above all the rest, at all times during the term of his representation, keep up so happy an understanding between him and his constituents, as to be properly informed of all those evils to which they are exposed by the operation of causes seemingly foreign; whether

whether affecting their own claims, or the claims of their posterity. Unless therefore the soliciting candidate can prove himself possessed of the above requisites, he is insolently attempting to abuse his country ; and need I add, that the people who can be consenting to such abuse, can justly blame no one but themselves. For this reason, it should seem that the men born and educated in their county, as neither their life or principles can then be unknown to them, must be more eligible than a stranger coming from no one can tell where, and whose only desire is to step into parliament by any methods. Now, as it is unhappily notorious that the constituents are as little critical in their demands, as their members conscientious respecting their qualifications, can it be wonderful that the man whom *self* has brought into the representation, should suffer *self* alone to engross his attention ?—

tion?—And hence it is, that the business of election is no sooner finished than the electors are forgot, and conscious that they have acted censurably in their choice, they become silent under every disagreeable consequence.

Or, if at length provoked to speak, how injudiciously are their complaints directed!—Instead of each county calling upon its own representative for information concerning the cause for their oppressions, or an account of the part they have taken in their safety, on every new and disagreeable act's taking place, the king and his ministers are the persons they attack, and their own wicked representatives joyfully hide behind these great objects of public resentment, and beyond measure congratulate themselves on the folly of their constituents, in never recollecting that though it may be the king and his ministers interest to annoy them, it is the duty of their representatives to pro-

test them against every such annoyance : nay, the very condition on which they received their parliamentary honours, and the very purpose for which they were elected. So long as the people of England will thus mistake the effect for the cause, so long must things remain in the wretched plight we find them.—The reformation to be salutary must be uniform, and the spirited part of the public find means, by electing honest men into the majority of our counties, to keep the key of their own intellects in its only safe repository.

We should learn wisdom though of our enemies. The court spare neither industry nor expence to promote their purposes: the little boroughs are marked down for their own, as not only being most easily purchased, but least open to observation. In large cities, some few sensible men are generally found, to teach the rest to check
the

the career of tyranny, and stop up the sources of oppression. All this is very clear and intelligible ; yet, though every individual must know, that provided a majority can be constituted by any methods, the nation must be undone ; instead of rousing in their own defence, and, like honest and sensible men, making a proper calculation of the necessary force for being an overmatch for their enemies ; they are content to wait for our courtiers cutting their own throats, by striking out what they at the same time call the rotten part of the constitution, by being the part which evermore gives them the advantage.

Yet you will perhaps say, these are womanly observations ; but does it necessarily follow, that they are not rational, evident, and as plainly to be understood, as that two and two make four ; or that when we are attacked, if we will not defend ourselves, we

must on all occasions be overcome? It is probable I shall end my days in the country, and shall continue, now and then, to write on these subjects, by way of keeping my hand in; for, though it may be very true that a woman is nothing in London if she is not a fine lady, you are sensible a woman is nobody in the country unless she is a politician—and I feel myself as unwilling to lose any useful acquirement, as I may become ambitious of attaining whatever can be brought under the denomination of an accomplishment. This comfort, however, remains with me; that, with all my imperfections on my head, I am your acknowledged friend.—But a-propos, do you not intend to return to us so soon as these political tempests are overpast?—I need not now tell you, you are the source of all our pleasures; so that you can judge how ardently

TO MISS FIELDING. 27

ardently we wish your return, but
none more ardently than

Yours, &c.

E. S.

L E T T E R III.

MISS FIELDING TO MISS SIDNEY.

HOW agreeably, my dear, do you
trifle on the most serious sub-
jects!—but give your vivacity, I be-
seech you, full scope; for though
your concern could alone aggravate
the horrible in my destiny, your viva-
city has the power in a surprising de-
gree of softening it, and stealing me,
as it were, from myself.

Never, I hope, were disputes car-
ried such a length in any family, as
between my father and uncle;—tooth

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and

and nail, every social band rent asunder, every natural duty violated, and all for the good of their country truly! though that country would have been exactly as glorious if they had not, and will continue as wretched, though they have been called into existence.

My dear Sir, said I to my father this morning, taking advantage of a calm moment, one more or one less in the house, can it be so mighty a matter? If you had the power indeed, by the introduction of my brother, to constitute a majority, and carry any favourite or desirable point, all my queries would be answered; but so far from that being the case, I recollect to have heard you boast within these few hours, that the balance is already no less happily than considerably on the side of your friends.

I believe the girl will make me mad.—But this comes of having petticoat

ticoat politicians;—the puerilities, the follies of the sex will mix themselves with their noblest ideas.

But, my dear papa, whilst you are acting agreeably to your own inclinations, can it be good policy to put your children upon disobliging so rich — By Heaven, exclaimed the dear infatuated man, I would rather behold you perishing on a dunghill, than eating the bread of disloyalty and licentiousness.

Suffer me, without being offended, to intreat you Sir, if not to correct your language, at least to adapt it to my powers of comprehension. What can you mean by licentious bread?

The bread of patriotism, which I sincerely hope will for ever elude your lips, was it possible for you to catch at it. Patriot, Sophia, according to the modern sense, is only another name for a rebel to his king, a

rebel to his God, a fire-brand to the peace and good order of society. Do you now begin to understand me?

It distresses me beyond measure, Sir, not to be able to reconcile the duties I have been taught to think incumbent on me to preserve inviolate.—My good mama never bid me look up to you with reverence, without pointing out the necessity of treating my uncle with the highest respect, and as to affection, she encouraged me to divide it equally between you.

Why am I thus insulted with your mother's idle maxims?—she was a peace-lover, and had a thousand ridiculous ideas and scruples, incompatible with an enlarged mind. But education, I find, can do little against strong prejudices; and after all my toil and expence, instead of having, as I flattered myself, an accomplished woman

man to my daughter, I find myself the father of a contemptible mongrel.

And yet, Sir, notwithstanding you suffer your warmth of temper to hurry you such lengths, that mother was unspeakably dear to you ; and could have done more, much more, towards persuading you to relinquish a point with what you are pleased to call limited powers, than all the boasted talents of your daughter could effect, when even in the meridian of paternal favour. Do you think, Sir, if she was living, that poor Henry——

I forbid your playing upon me in this manner, for you make me despise myself for my irresolution :—however, pert madam, I will for once anticipate all you can offer, and declare to you that Henry shall either sit in the House of Commons member for Piddleton, or he shall turn out of this house ; therefore, as you choose

to make yourself busy, you may make him acquainted with his only alternative.—And thus unsatisfactorily ended our morning's conversation.

My father is, I am afraid, resolved to try and prove his children in the school of self-denial and adversity—not a word will he listen to of retrieving, though he is beyond measure eager to adopt every proposed scheme to precipitate his ruin.

Children are indeed, my dear, on very uneasy ground when they must attempt the correction of their parents errors; a sense of duty, superior age, the necessary violation, as it were, of the laws of nature and of reason, all conspiring to seal their lips, though it should even be apparent that they are becoming, by their silence, accessory to the destruction of themselves and family.

How

How light and airy your subjects !
how free from anxiety your heart !—
But I was once accustomed to insist
upon it, that the evils of life were just
what we were pleased to make them
by our manner of bearing them, ex-
cept the hand of disease, or keen
necessity, was amongst their number.
My philosophy is however greatly
shaken, my firmness of mind over-
come, and the fear of the future per-
mitted to interrupt the present. Never-
theless, through all my gloom a
smile will frequently break forth when
engaged in the performance of my
diurnal task, which you well know is
reading the St. James's Chronicle,
and other news-papers that daily come
down under cover to these parlia-
ment-men, and almost daily set the
house in a flame.

Yet let me do our news-writers
justice ; for it is plain, that to the very
best of their abilities, they try to keep

the balance even: for having displayed the patriotic side of the question, they so manage it, that a letter shall instantly pop upon you in favour of the court; and this pretty see-saw work is duly kept up in every succeeding publication.—My uncle and father were obliged to settle it, that I should receive no interruption in this my employment, or there would have been no end to it, neither of them choosing to wait the gratification of his brother's curiosity, though to enable him to gratify his own in the most ample manner—a table is therefore placed as a kind of barrier between these hostile partizans, at which I with the greatest composure feat myself, and then with an audible voice read whatever my author is pleased to present me with.

My father has much the advantage of my uncle in command of temper, and is therefore content with keeping
up

up an interchange of significant nods and winks with me his daughter, duly indicating that such a paragraph is a puff, such a one all malice, this letter a palpable falsehood, and that an egregious blunder ; all which passes as unobserved, as unsuspected by the patriot, he too warmly entering into the spirit of the passages in favour of his tenets, to be alive to any other circumstance whatever ; and thus far all goes well, and peace dwells with us—But no sooner do I enter on the other side the question, than the poor gentleman's seat becomes visibly uneasy ; and notwithstanding repeated calls to order, some worse tokens of disapprobation than pishes and pshaws will escape him—untill at length, finding the subject on the side of the court sensibly handled, and that it can, and is proved that good order is quite as essential to the well-being of the nation as liberty, he jumps

up, damns the conditions, which my father tells him do not admit of such outrageous displeasure, and away he flounces out of the house.

My father having so fair an opportunity before him, does not fail to expatiate on the absurdity of those men who can profess themselves friends to their country, whilst they are tearing it to pieces with intestine broils, and painting anarchy in such fearful, good order in such lovely colours, as I am unable to give you an idea of. It naturally follows, that I look up to the king as the father of his people, and honour his ministers as the wisest of mankind.

My uncle's study-window you know commands a view of our hall door: the good petulant gentleman, therefore, no sooner sees my father sally forth, than he hastens over, in order, by the wisdom of his conversation,
to

to give me an antidote against all the mental poison he apprehends I have imbibed during the tête-à-tête, which he had not the power to interrupt or prevent. His arguments, my dear, are always long, learned and laboured; I shall not therefore trouble you with a specimen; but their purport is the convincing me that the king (which is really somewhat paradoxical) is the worst enemy of his kingdom, and his ministers, without exception, the basest and most ignorant of all mankind. The consequence of this unceasing diligence is, that instead of fixing me what he wishes and verily believes, the alternate changes which are rung in my ears on the separate merits of these contending parties, produce all that jumble of ideas I have heard you say you have sometimes experienced, and render me by turns, courtier, anticourtier, and a political sceptic. One circumstance is

is however exceedingly pleasant: when my sentiments happen to concur with the tenets of these sages in politics, I mean in our private interviews and discourings on public matters, I am then a phænomenon of wisdom; but when they happen to run counter, they affect to treat me as an insignificant girl, who, with a smattering of knowledge, has the vanity to expect her opinion to be decisive.

I shall have a glorious time of it when the general election comes on—for so just, though so ludicrous, is your description of the toil and the barbarity of those periods, that I most heartily dread their approach. I have known my father ply his guests with loyal healths untill they have tumbled under the table, where, for the honour of the court, they have remained snoring untill sleep had enabled them to rise and renew their zeal in their favourite cause.

Nor

Nor has the matter been a jot mended at my uncle's—where the worthy patriots, in defence of liberty and the laws, have waded you through whole pipes of wine, and heroically hazarded fevers and every disease excess bears in her train, to punish the human body, in order to testify their warm affection for the body politic.

If ever I marry, be assured my dear Emma I will never marry a partizan; for though the gentle, the liberal mind my mother possessed enabled her to please both these strange relations, I am too well acquainted with her daughter's deficiencies to conceive her capable of accommodating herself to the caprices of any family but the one she is now cast in.

Henry and I are for ever talking of you, nor is it given me to determine which of us takes most pleasure in the subject. He borrows my bracelet

let because ornamented with your sweet picture, and having retired for hours, which it is presumable he spends in soft contemplation, he returns it with a half-suppressed sigh—and extolls—the—painter.

I wish he was of consequence enough with you to render this break a disappointment.

Yet, though it is apparent he thinks of little else but my beloved friend, and though he is for ever seeking opportunities of talking of her; to every charge, however lively, made of his being in love, he answers, No, no—nor am I at a loss to account for his conduct in that particular—But some miracle may enable him to proclaim aloud, what he would now tremble to whisper, and I be permitted to hope.——

But am I not yours, as affectionately as any human event can render
me,

TO MISS SIDNEY.

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me, or any other additions teach me
to feel, than subscribing myself,

Your unalterable friend,

S. F.

L E T T E R I V .

FROM THE SAME TO THE SAME.

YOUR advice then, my lovely friend, was not altogether so disinterested as I imagined. O these artlessly artful people!—But you and Henry speak the same language with your lips, and your conduct equally betrays you.

You love my brother—O no, impossible—and yet you could wish to hear he was sent to London before you, though in so abject, so servile a character as that of a place-hunter—

ter—You have however obtained your wish, and I have lost my brother.

Finding my father wholly inexorable, and that Henry's banishment or his acquiescence was the only grace to be expected at his hands, I immediately visited my uncle and informed him of what had passed. He is delivered! exclaim'd he in a kind of transport; my boy is deliver'd from the shame that awaited him; and do you assure him, that in whatever other situation he may be cast, I will support him; he shall have credit with my banker (and I will write to him directly for that purpose) for moderate sums, and I can trust both his principles and his prudence never to want great ones.—So saying he hurried me away, that I might strike, as he phrased it, whilst the iron was hot, and avert the reproach of my family.

I now sought Henry—and found him—shall I—yes I will tell you--carving
ing

ing your name on your favourite peach-tree in the little garden—I smiled, I suppose, somewhat significantly, for he blushed most intelligently—and so far things are as they should be—which is the only comment I will make on certain parts in your letter.

I told him what he had to fear from my father and to hope from my uncle—He embraced me tenderly—bid me often think of him, and sometimes write to him—then withdrew, at once to spare mine, and conceal his own sensibility.—I can no more—my tears—but he is the brother of my tenderest affections.

My uncle expects each succeeding post shall be fraught with news from that center of politics, the metropolis.—Henry therefore will have his hands full, my father having formed similar expectations with my uncle, exclusive of the devoirs, I flatter myself, you
will

will do him the honour to exact from him.—As for poor me, I suppose I must be thankful for an occasional how do ye, as sisters, like wives, are the least of all their sex remembered by the men they love.

But a thought strikes me replete with consolation—Who knows how far a fair friend of mine may condescend to supply every brotherly deficiency, by communicating all she knows concerning him? Forgive me this piece of vanity, of presumption—but you, who make such critical distinctions between friendship and a softer passion, may do many things either in the good-natured or the amusing way that would be suspicious in your humble servant—and thereby hangs a tale.

This party rage, how does it absorb every valuable principle!—Henry, the only son of his father, was suffered to launch

launch on the wide ocean of the world without exciting one paternal pang, and seems already, together with all the virtues of his character, to be sunk in oblivion.

There is indeed nothing left for him but to scribble himself into renovated favour; and yet that would be a service of danger, from his being obliged to keep up a very opposite correspondence to that which must recommend him to his father. I must set my wits to work in order to relieve him from this dilemma—or suppose, my dear, as your inventive faculties are abundantly quicker than mine, you was once again to assist me. Your removal to London, as we are compelled to live in a state of cruel separation, one would imagine of little concern to me—But though your mention of that city, casually, in your first letter, did not in the least alarm me, your serious annunciation

tion of your intended journey, in the letter now before me, occasioned me a very painful sensation * : it is however the fixed resolution of your mother, and must be subscribed to.—Your mind is formed, your judgment established, and your taste incorruptible : I therefore fear much more for your health than your morals, as it will be impossible for you to keep yourself so detached from the polite world, as at all times to avoid the elegant vigil or the midnight revel.

The decay of your lovely complexion will be the least price you must pay for these unnatural amusements ; your delicate constitution will become insensibly the victim, unless you have the resolution, in justice to yourself and in compassion to me, to be evermore on your guard in this article of dangerous, however fashionable conduct.

My

* The letter here mentioned is omitted.

My uncle grievously complained to me a few days before Harry's departure, that he was a lukewarm patriot. I know not what to make of him, continued he—requiring good sense to be the ground work of party principles—who thinks of good sense, when they are saving their country?

What a severe satire, my dear, on the times is this slip of the tongue!—I believe I might call it an actual libel, for have we not been informed by one of our wisest judges from the bench; that in proportion to the truth of a sarcasm it is a libel?—In other words, great men may be knaves, but small ones may not call them by their proper names; so that, as Garth says,
“ Little villains must submit to fate,
“ That great ones may enjoy the world in state.”

But though the power and the ingenuity of the higher orders of mankind, might combine to wrest the laws

thus to their own accommodation, I think it was hazarding a good deal, to tell the people as much in actual terms — because, my dear, arguing consequentially, if we are not to mention the vices of the right honourable world, it can never be fair for them to take cognizance of our little lapses.—But my poor uncle was too much heated with the idea of what he conceived the right, to be aware of the wrong that had escaped him, and wrapping himself up in his own integrity, most cordially despised the opinion of all mankind. The predicament, however, which this conversation too plainly brought Henry under was an alarming one—he must have either attached himself to one party or broke hands with both; and as his father's circumstances became more and more desperate, he would infallibly have been rendered more and more dependent on my uncle, who I am satisfied would
soon

soon have insisted upon either finally fixing him or finally casting him off. — This was a pleasant prospect ; Henry has happily flown from it, but there is no flying for me—I am as it were the bulwark of our domestic harmony, and could not remove myself without its dissolution. Yet how could it be expected that a young fellow who has received what the world calls a liberal education, and been accustomed to a choice, a will of his own, should have it presented to him what party principles he should adopt?—as if his soul was to be wholly passive in a cause wherein those of his relations were so abundantly active—but it was a narrow and an unreasonable demand. If one power indeed had been to dictate, the strange request would have been somewhat less extravagant, but when my father would have him a courtier on pain of his mortal displeasure, and my uncle commands him to be a pa-

triot on the forfeiture of his fortune, it was morally impossible the poor creature could be either, and remain on this spot of absurdity.

O that my poor afflicted aunt could exert all her powers to moderate this foolish tyranny, this provoking despotism!—She was a truly good and sensible woman—but tho' the strokes of Providence, I conceive, ought to be submitted to unrepiningly, we are not prohibited complaining when oppressed by human misfortunes; I mean such as are derived from vanity, obstinacy, pride, or other mental imperfections, which reason teaches us to reduce to a due subordination to her laws. My uncle is, nevertheless, by this miserable condition of his wife, tied down from doing all the mischief his inclination might prompt him to on any desperate disputation with my father; as from not being able to unite himself to any other woman, he cannot conveniently

conveniently have a legitimate heir—and such is his opinion of those women who could bless him with an illegitimate one, that they could never quiet his scruples, that he might be cherishing and caressing a spurious offspring—for he will believe the whole sex is either exemplarily virtuous or dreadfully vicious. This then should seem some kind of security for Henry; and yet as my uncle's possessions are all personality, it frequently occurs to me, that as your humorists rob their heirs to endow a college or an hospital (for from the abuse of all charitable institutions I cannot consider such actions as pious ones) why may not this our relation be induced to obtain a place for his statue in some patriotic niche, by leaving the bulk, if not the whole, of his fortune, to some celebrated charity, or celebrated body of patriots?—But this is all idle conjecture, for as to my part, I have never yet disobliged him, and his little

doubts respecting Henry can never amount to a cause of disinheritance—though if he could ever forsake us, it would be in some violent fit of resentment, which, whilst it made him eager to punish the offending father, would make him insensible to the claims of his innocent children.

Henry observed all these possible evils with the most stoical firmness—what he never possessed he seemed to conceive he could not lose—but able soever as he might be to reconcile himself to my uncle's will, I know not by what arguments he will be able to accommodate himself to the devastations in his paternal provision.

His generosity, I am convinced, makes him think me by much in the wrong situation; but if as a woman it cannot be denied I am more circumscribed in my opportunities of improving a scanty pittance, I will, by learning to live happily on a little, lift myself

self at least into equality with this happier sex.

Your mother once gave me hopes, that if ever she visited London she would take our village in her route ; but I suppose the too notorious dissensions of my relations will deter her from fulfilling them, as it cannot be concealed that she could not utter a syllable on party subjects but must offend one of the partizans—Yet might not those subjects by her amiable address be wholly avoided, in kind consideration of,

My dear Emma's affectionate,

S. FIELDING.

L E T T E R V.

MR. FIELDING TO MISS FIELDING.

HAVING already informed you by a few lines of my safe arrival in London, I need not on this occasion, my dear sister, advert to that particular, but tell you the extraordinary yet natural commands I have received from my father and uncle. My uncle in the strongest terms enjoins me to be frequent in my visits at Mr. —, Mr. Stickler's first friend, in order, as he phrases it, that I may drink at the fountain head of politics ; whilst my father condescendingly hints to me, that the only road to his returning favour lies through Lord Ruleall's levees.—Scylla and Charybdis are thus evermore subjecting me to inevitable shipwreck.—It is possible I may occasionally drop in upon both these great public characters, but I leave

leave you to determine how possible it will be for me to take the hand of either in friendship, when it must be my daily practice to ridicule both. There is something so whimsically just, and so amiably judicious, in your mode of conducting yourself, that I can never sufficiently admire it—for, without any real sacrifices of your veracity, you acquit yourself so perfectly to the satisfaction of both your relations, that was my father to be asked respecting your political tenets, he would gravely affirm them to correspond with his own, at the same time that my uncle believes himself your oracle in that sublime article of Christian faith. They would not however be content to take me by implication, or I was as willing to temporise as yourself; but whilst you was encouraged to play in your agreeable manner with the subject, a demand was continually made on me for my

serious sentiments: I had therefore no resource but in the rectitude of my intentions; but though I could not descend to lye, I would not hesitate to make a pilgrimage to oblige them.

I cannot help thinking opposition has received a severe shock by the death of one great man, and the defection of another—not but I am sensible you laugh at every effort of opposing government measures, from persuading yourself, that what they will do, they will do either by fraud or force, and sometimes by the united powers of each of those *national* principles.

The maxim at present is, and I fear will prove but too successful, to let the public bawl, as wayward children are left to cry themselves asleep.

I am aware you will suspect the maxim to originate from a people, who, you would insist upon it, know how to undermine where open attack is found

found unavailing, and can patiently abide the repeated repulse and the complicated indignity that would *shrive* the heart of an Englishman. Do not, however, suffer nationality to take hold of your mind; it is a narrow and mean principle of judging, as well as acting. I agree with you so far as to acknowledge that custom and education have great power over the individual, as also that there are customs which operate characteristically on a set of men, who associate and converse with one another, and form their manners and regulate their ideas by a kind of established standard—but, just as this observation may be in the general, I by no means subscribe to it in particular instances, from persuading myself that the criterion of right and wrong, as well as of true taste, is universal, and in no degree confined to any one nation, religion, or language.

Mr. Stickler is, they tell me, a well-bred man, Lord Ruleall an insinuating one—that the former writes, and the latter speaks most happily—but I have not my political faith to seek, and therefore have little to fear from the wit or wisdom of these celebrated partizans.--We cannot look into politics with rational eyes, which circumstance is sufficient of itself to keep me suspended like the tomb of Mahomet, between heaven and earth; or more properly, I shall always hold myself ready to recede from or approach near to either party, as the magnet of truth may incline me; and as Lord Ruleall has done the nation not only the most glaring, but the most capital injury, in separating the prince and the people, and Mr. Stickler professes himself desirous to effect a reconciliation, so essential to the safety of the sovereign and the happiness of the subject, I may at the present

sent juncture, according to my above-mentioned rule, pronounce myself a patriot.

I could nevertheless wish, for the happiness of my fellow countrymen, as no man can insure success, worthy soever as his design may be, or judiciously concerted his measures, that Mr. Stickler may not engage them to lean so absolutely on him as to lose their own strength. This kingdom has produced patriots who have served their own private ends at the expence of a confiding multitude: but even admitting Mr. Stickler an exception to all rule, as a man he must be fallible, and as a single voice unimportant in competition with his numerous opponents.

I perceive you do not quite approve of this prejudgment, and may it not prove prophetic!—but, as actions are the testimonials of popular merit,

it will not be long before Mr. Stickler's actions teach us the true estimate of his public character.

I am not, I confess, arrived to such a degree of refinement as to be capable of ascertaining how far it is necessary for a man's conduct to be disinterested to deserve the epithet of virtuous; but this I know, that as self is at all times the active principle with the people, however diversified its complexion, some entering into popular confusions for amusement, others from the sense of present, and still more from the apprehension of future grievances, all assuming the name of liberty; so has private pique and interested resentment been discovered to be the acting principle with the leader.—But I again submit the decision to time, and will drop the equally perplexed and perplexing subject.

When

When did you hear from your fair friend?—She, Sophia, has none of the difficulties to contend with, which you and I for such a succession of years have so painfully experienced. Her gentle, generous mind—But I have done.—Our family estate, tho' little inferior once to a principality, is now, I am convinced, so impaired by party zeal, that you and I can barely hope for a competency, should we be so happy as to escape so severe a shipwreck as must reduce us to the necessity of subsisting by those talents which we have cultivated for our entertainment. You will perhaps wonder whence I caught this fearful idea. Usurious mortgages are not long in eating up the best estates; and as for court dependance it is cobweb-hold. We will then join in wishing Miss Sidney all the felicity her superiority entitles her to,

to, and aspire merely to the rank of her humble friends.

I am, my dear sister, &c.

H. FIELDING.

LETTER VI.

MISS FIELDING TO MR. FIELDING.

WHY, Henry, will you not speak out? That you love Miss Sidney has long been apparent to me, nor am I at a loss to divine her sentiments—but intimate as we are, and exempt as I know myself from no other part of her confidence, delicacy has on this subject for ever sealed her lips, as an apprehension of being unacceptable has hitherto your own. You must be sensible this is the only point I can turn to for your mutual felicity, as it would be no less absurd than

than unavailing to endeavour to persuade her to violate proper forms for your encouragement. If I have your permission, not being able otherwise to break the ice, I will become an errant go-between, and in your name write the tenderest, the most agreeable things—unless you can prevail upon yourself to let your own pen speak for you, which I verily believe would be trebly efficacious.

My father and uncle have had a tight struggle—the latter is however at last victorious—for the honour I may say of the Borough of Piddleton; as, if report may be relied on, the popular zealot, in order to gain his purpose, has, in the language of the good old song, “caused his gold to fly like chaff before the wind.” My father, it is plain, comforts himself with the hopes that, though jockeyed now, he shall triumph in his turn. I was very nigh falling into irretrievable disgrace,

disgrace, by remarking that as the sitting was so far advanced a seat could scarcely be worth contending for—but I find that admission at the fag-end of one sessions is considered as earnest of being received on the opening of the new one; and I have burnt my fingers sufficiently to teach me caution for the future.

My uncle seems to talk very confidently of Mr. Stickler's being in the House at the general election; nay, hinges the fate of the kingdom upon that single event.—But I, who am called a pert, though forbid to think myself a discerning partizan, cannot enter into the idea of one man's saving a whole country, I mean after the common mode of representation.

My uncle complains that your descriptions want salt; why will you scruple dissecting your fellow-creatures for his amusement?—I wish, for
your

your sake however as well as his, that we could change pens, for I warrant mine should be dipped sufficiently deep in popular acrimony. But as you are not qualified to do these things yourself, why not employ some ready scribe in your service—and the more especially as I could give him his cue?—for by my frequent reading of the news-papers I am well informed what are the expressions that best hit his fancy: *viz.* venal ministry, indolent king, daring Lord Ruleall, oppressed people, liberty, property, broken windows, and burnt effigies.

O how his honest ears are tickled when I fall on a long string of these favourite epithets!

But for my part I would fain know what these liberty-boys would be at—they talk much of the laws of the land in the very moment of their most outrageous nonconformity thereto,
and

and spread out the duties of the sovereign at the same time that they themselves are violating every duty of society.—But it is an inexplicable riddle, and as such shall puzzle me no longer.

I hate the metropolis, and heartily wish you safe at a distance from it, yet not at the present juncture—for know your admired Miss Sidney spends the winter in London: and it is very probable, for the sister's sake, she may take some little notice of the brother. It will be very convenient also to place your visits to the same account, which I thus most cordially give you leave to do.

I should envy any one but yourself the hours you will pass with her; but your happiness is mine, and as such shall be enjoyed by me. Write to me immediately, for I owe Miss Sidney a letter, and would gladly p'ead
your

TO MR. FIELDING. 67

your cause whilst I am making her just returns for her remembrance of me. Let no court beauty supplant her, I conjure you, in your affections; for however fair the outside, you will never meet with the mental accomplishments in any one of them she possesses;—and she alone shall be the sister of

Yours, &c.

S. FIELDING.

LETTER VII.

MISS FIELDING TO MISS SIDNEY.

THAT our house stands firm on its basis, is with me an unspeakable miracle. Contention and wild uproar have however dwelt for some time within its walls, and hourly threatened its destruction.

My

My uncle tells me this last party-manceuvre has cost my father nine thousand pounds.—Will no evacuations bring him to his senses? or will they resist every conviction but the stroke that finally undoes us?

I find my uncle has contrived to be my father's mortgagee; but that is small comfort, for he has so large a portion of what Mr. Sterne calls perseverance in a good cause, obstinacy in a bad one, in his composition, that I am satisfied he will prove as rigorous a creditor as the greatest stranger in the universe. Nor will it in any degree be the better for Harry—for in order to revenge himself on the patrimonial acres for being so idly sacrificed, he will harrow up the earth untill he has exhausted all its strength, and rendered his nephew heir to a desert tract. But let fortune do her worst, I am resolved to meet her most malicious turns unmoved, and, without

without too much regretting the past, or too much depending on the future, repose myself on the bosom of innocence and industry.

You tell me every thing is in readiness for your journey. Will you do my brother the honour to let him attend you at Hounslow, if you even cannot consent to constitute him your cicisbeo on other occasions?—On this ground I shall not take a single step without your permission; and yet I know your mother has too much good sense to be alarmed at the devoirs of a young man who would rather die than be guilty of a mean action, and never once had conception of an insidious one.

Well may we say that the rose and the thorn are inseparable—for in proportion as Henry is admitted to an acquaintance with your excellencies, he must adore them and tremble at the approach

approach of every wealthier favourite. Though my brother could not prevail upon himself to be the tool of a party, even to oblige a father he loved, a young fellow with no other spur to his intent than genuine servility joyfully accepted my father's proposal, and stood forth the warm candidate for Piddleton. My uncle's mark of hatred is set upon him—nevertheless, lest the breach should not be sufficiently wide without his assistance, he is introduced into our house upon a footing of the utmost familiarity, and wholly engrosses my father's ear and heart. I shudder at the idea; but, my dear friend, it is too plain that I am declining in my consequence, and where the matter will end I am unable to conjecture.

My uncle solicits me to make his house my own, but I am fearful of pushing things to extremities, and justifying my father's desertion of
his

his children—besides, you know Emma, my uncle's mode of living is very unlike every thing I have been taught to approve. Though no sportsman himself, he delights in the humours of the chace; and every man is acceptable at his table that can roar out a catch in honour of horses and hounds.—Add to which, for the purpose, I suppose, of preserving and promoting his popularity, every individual that can boast his qualification as an elector has not only free egress and regress at the hall, but is received with open arms.—A pretty table this for a young woman to preside at, where the spirit and barbarity of electioneering is kept up all the year round! And yet I much fear this will prove at last my best asylum. Was only myself concerned my choice would soon be determined, but my brother will stand or fall in his uncle's opinion according as his

sister has the happiness to please him, and I must play my cards with suitable circumspection. I was last night beyond measure startled—for, would you believe it, this tool of a candidate, if I mistake not, had the impudence to ogle me.—I did command myself so far as not to rebuke him, and I hope he will save me from every future provocation by sinking into his primitive insignificance.

I would, but cannot conceal it—my mind is most unhappily agitated.—I apprehend I know not what of mortification and misery—but my father's countenance is certainly no longer the same towards me, and the house seems already to bear the vestiges of ruin.

My brother's nobleness of mind will, I also foresee, expose him to endless inconveniences.—Read the inclosed—It is, I confess, a breach of confidence;

confidence ; but it will shew you the man—a matrimonial candidate—he would not, Emma, accept a diadem from the woman he hated, and has, you will read, insuperable delicacies where he loves.—The only consolation that remains with me is that you cannot disesteem him for peculiarities, which are so like those interwoven in your own nature, and in the general, your rule of conduct.

Return to your family—alas ! my dear girl, I must not lose a thought that way : my father and his new ally have but too many opportunities for machinating whilst I am on the spot, and I will never, either directly or indirectly, with my knowledge, assist in weaving the web of my own destruction.

My uncle this morning, in a fit of kindness and generosity, made me a present of a hundred pound bank-note, and I this afternoon paid it away

to one of my father's most clamorous creditors, so that it is very possible it may revert to him again. You may judge from hence how low it is with a man who has perverted the finest talents, and instead of advancing the reputation of his children, undone both them and himself.

Do not however suffer yourself to be infected by my melancholy, but write to me with your usual chearfulness; for be assured that chearfulness is the cordial drop in the existence of

Yours, &c.

S. FIELDING.

L E T-

L E T T E R VIII.

MISS SIDNEY TO MISS FIELDING.

PROVIDED you will promise me that when no longer able to stand your ground you will fly to the arms of friendship, I will be satisfied—I will not break out into deserved exclamations against the unnatural conduct of your father, or the barbarous manners of your uncle: I will constrain myself from characterising the presuming wretch as he ought, who could look my Sophia into confusion at her own table, and, if possible, submit myself unrepining to the will of Heaven.

But, my dearest girl, illustrious soever as the pride may be, do not let the pride of your brother's heart mislead you.—There is nothing, believe me, humiliating, much less degrading,

in the acceptance of good offices from those we love ; nay it is only an equally perverse and stubborn spirit that could make you deaf to the pleadings of friendship:—but I will hope better things, and as you answer or disappoint my expectations in this important particular, measure the sincerity of your affection for me. We should have been by this time in London, if a slight indisposition had not induced my mother to defer our departure—we however, unless some disagreeable and unforeseen accident intervenes, shall quit the place tomorrow morning—and then for your brother's attentions, which, to shew you I am neither prude nor coquette, nor aught but your unaltered and unalterable friend, I fairly confess to you, cannot in my opinion be commenced too soon, nor discontinued too late; and you have my good leave to tell him the utmost extent of this my permission—

permission—for to be plain with you, I am as little apprehensive of his misconstruing my favourable declarations, as of his proving a check to my London admirers.

Unknowing as I am in the ways of the world, I can prepare myself for the buzz of flatterers; but as I have settled it never to confide, I defy time or place to render them deceivers—but sentiment avault!

Old as I am (and I have attained the verge of one and twenty) I have never yet seen London—The small-pox, that formidable disease, being the bug-bear with my mother, at the same time that she had not the courage to consent to my being inoculated. But you know it is her opinion, however erroneous, that together with the pock the humours of the subject from which it is taken are communicable;

in the acceptance of good offices from those we love ; nay it is only an equally perverse and stubborn spirit that could make you deaf to the pleadings of friendship:—but I will hope better things, and as you answer or disappoint my expectations in this important particular, measure the sincerity of your affection for me. We should have been by this time in London, if a slight indisposition had not induced my mother to defer our departure—we however, unless some disagreeable and unforeseen accident intervenes, shall quit the place to-morrow morning—and then for your brother's attentions, which, to shew you I am neither prude nor coquette, nor aught but your unaltered and unalterable friend, I fairly confess to you, cannot in my opinion be commenced too soon, nor discontinued too late; and you have my good leave to tell him the utmost extent of this my permission—

permission—for to be plain with you, I am as little apprehensive of his misconstruing my favourable declarations, as of his proving a check to my London admirers.

Unknowing as I am in the ways of the world, I can prepare myself for the buzz of flatterers; but as I have settled it never to confide, I defy time or place to render them deceivers—but sentiment avaunt!

Old as I am (and I have attained the verge of one and twenty) I have never yet seen London—The small-pox, that formidable disease, being the bug-bear with my mother, at the same time that she had not the courage to consent to my being inoculated. But you know it is her opinion, however erroneous, that together with the pock the humours of the subject from which it is taken are communicable;

and she will tell you abundance of tales to corroborate this tradition.

I am not indeed sufficiently skillful to speak one way or the other, but must own that I have met with numbers who complain of ill health, and date its decline from their inoculation. It is nevertheless the fashion, and has been beyond measure successful in the preservation of beauty: I therefore profess myself a friend to the invention.—Yet is not this being somewhat ungrateful to nature, as she has within these few months done the kindest part by me imaginable, having sprinkled this face, of which you are so fond, with a gentle, a generous hand, and left it barely possible to say from appearances that I have passed the Rubicon.

I mean to look about me in the new world, into which I am on the point of entering, in order to
form

form a just judgment of men and things. In the country you are sensible scandal and politics are the only variation of topics we can boast, but I presume good-breeding must equally restrain the calumniator and the politician from shewing themselves in good company, not to mention a word of those succedaneums for conversation, cards, music, and public amusements.

I fear Henry will give but very moderately into the *beau monde*, for he has not the least turn for elegant trifling, and is wholly unpracticed in the small-talk of compliment.—Congenial souls will converge towards each other—but you conceive him disgraced by the comparison, and I most heartily beg your pardon. Could you have made one in this excursion—but I should then have been too happy.

My mother honours you for a prudence and resolution I condemn; for is it not the impediment to our social intercourse, without operating beneficially on your strange relations in any respect? It may for aught I know be amiable, but it seems to me contrary to nature to love those we are convinced do not love us.—You will tell me perhaps that duty is an indispensable tie, and the foibles of those to whom we are indebted for our existence, though open to the attack of all the world beside, ought to be sacred with us. Come, my dear, I will meet you on this ground; but as no logic under the sun can make your uncle other than your uncle, shall expect your mental bondage in no degree to be extended to him. I have a thought borrowed this instant from the plot of *Love in a Village*, that / would with your concurrence answer all our purposes.

A dis.

A disagreeable marriage (nor is your situation less distressing) puts the spirited Rosetta on seeking an asylum in the house of her friend, under the humble character of her waiting gentlewoman. My poor valuable Jenny you know is dead, and her loss as yet unsupplied, I mean as to the article of attendance, for as to the other merits of her character, I must not hope ever to be so blessed again—What say you, are you heroine enough to follow Madam Rosetta's example?

Was I indeed a fine lady, or did my mother govern herself by the exalted ideas fine ladies entertain of their superior existence to that of their domestics, such a situation as I would thus court you to accept would be most horrible—but as modest address, agreeable manners, and a cultivated understanding, would be sufficient passports (as witness my poor lost Jenny) for any young woman to al-

most equality in my family, I have a notion we could so contrive it as to be unspeakably happy, and the more especially as it would be incompatible withy our schemes to appear in public. —But how, you will perhaps ask me, impose you for a stranger on my mother?—I reply by the power of dress; and need I tell you that if she had her suspicions she would sooner leave her curiosity ungratified in any instance than oppress a worthy dependent—or even at worst, the old proverb would avail us, as none are so deaf as those who will not hear, we may be assured none are so blind as those who will not see; and thus will you find I am furnished with my saving clause against every possible evil.

I will however as a friend let you into a little piece of secret history respecting my relations.—Ah! there are more strange uncles in the world than in the county of Hants.

Will

Will Sidney has accordingly advanced a most alarming length in a most alarming engagement, for the woman, my dear, is at best a beggar, a coquette, and an artful hussy. You must now perceive the necessity there will be for my mother's paying him a visit, and, by the exertion of her good sense, convincing him of his folly; and as for my good grandmother, age has so far deprived her of the organs of sight, that she would not be able to distinguish you from a Hottentot. We should have our hours to ourselves, I mean those of the morning and evening: you should dine in my apartment, because too young, too handsome, and too well bred to be turned in the kitchen; and we would sleep together.—By this little innocent artifice I should keep you out of harm's way until I could produce you with *eclat* as my best beloved and most valued friend. Think

of this, be wise and make me happy in your much regretted, your much desired company.

I am, &c.

E. SIDNEY.

L E T T E R IX.

MISS FIELDING TO MISS SIDNEY.

ALAS! my dear girl, how little are you aware that what is equally pleasing and practicable on the stage, is wholly incompatible with the schemes of real life—the poet creating difficulties merely for the purpose of removing them, and giving his characters the necessary disposition for settling the catastrophe to his wish.—But as to reviving the golden age in your family, or hoping the benevolence of your own heart to become

come epidemical, is an illusion you must renounce, and which can never have the desired effect on my senses. London then, believe me, is not the route I shall pursue, if even compelled to play the run-away, though it is my fixed resolution to consult your mother at the last exigence, and take only such steps as her wisdom can give sanction to—And now you are possessed of my most secret determinations.

But notwithstanding I myself cannot accept the lively offer you make me, I must bespeak the place of your waiting gentlewoman for my sweet neighbour Miss Granville—whose father has (I blush to tell you) been no less cruelly than unjustly persecuted within this week past by my uncle, for only preaching a sensible and heart-searching sermon on the merits of brotherly love, good order, and national unanimity.

The

The first intimation I received of the matter (for I imagine his office would have sanctified his doctrine) was by an interdiction never to see or converse with the lovely girl more.

You well know all her perfections, and that if the daughter of any man but a poor country curate, who out of pure affection buries her in obscurity, she would be celebrated for an angel, and will judge for me what a wound my sensibility must sustain in conforming to the barbarous mandate.—I have so far however dared to depart from the letter of the law, as to keep up a literary connexion with her, which next to your correspondence is held dear in my estimation.—I have communicated my designs respecting her, and presuming upon my interest with my friend, have given her the strongest hopes of success. Her father rejoices in the happy opportunity of disposing of her, and means to retire to a farm house

house at a distance, and subsist upon his little savings untill the good time may arrive of re-establishing him in his curacy.—This is a most reproachful piece of tyranny, and I expect you to condemn it as severely as it deserves. But if this letter reaches you in a propitious moment, I shall be enabled to bring good out of evil, and become the instrument of blessing where my mistaken relation meant to wound.

I long to have an epistle from you in your new situation, for many reasons.—Have you seen my brother?—Do you permit him to attend you?—But wherefore ask questions which time alone can resolve?—As to this spot, I am happy that Henry has quitted it, for nothing but absurdity and contention can live upon it : my uncle very charitably gives my father to beggary and repentance ; and my father no less kindly wishes some adverse stroke may humble my uncle : you
may

may guess what a fine time I have of it between them—nor is it possible to say where their violence of disposition will end. But I should tell you the new fancy my uncle has adopted in order to multiply his niece's difficulties.

I yesterday morning received a note from him requesting me to favour him with my company.

I was surpris'd at the ceremony with which I was invited, nor was my curiosity wholly inactive on the occasion; the distance was however too inconsiderable for my cogitations to be very profound before he had an opportunity of communicating the business.

You are sensible niece, said he, I always loved you, and that for your sake I have borne with such indignities from your wrong-headed father as never brother sustained from brother.

More-

Moreover, I need not now inform you he has undone himself, your brother, and you—unless you are wise enough to fix me in your interest. I have received a letter from one of my very great friends, whose family connexions are capital, and his estate a princely one, except that in the cause of liberty and his country it is a little dipped or so for the present. Now if you will be a good girl and follow my directions, I will bring about a match between him and you, and so give him as many thousand pounds with you, by way of marriage-portion, as shall settle all his affairs.—What say you, Sophia, to so generous an action?

I say, my dear Sir, that it as far exceeds my merits as it does my wishes.

How, how's that?

Do not be offended at my refusal of what I can convince you I ought
not

not to accept: you tell me my father is ruined in his circumstances; shall he then be forsaken by his child at the very instant when her filial attentions will be doubly necessary?—Believe me no—Affluence and I, Sir, can never join hands whilst my father is unhappily situated; and you must besides give me leave to tell you, that a matrimonial proposal would have no charms for me, though supported by the united approbation of my most revered relations.

Despicable fool! contemptible meanness! cried he, with such looks as I never in my life encountered from him—I command myself too much not to put you out of the house; but take notice, I desire you will never enter it more.

Never my dear uncle, unless the cloud of misfortune which now hangs over me, should by miracle be dispersed.—Of my duty and affection I would
give

give you every possible instance, when no price was in the question; for indeed, indeed Sir, I have a self-dependent, not a venal heart; and you must blame yourself, for so diligently cultivating the natural principles of freedom, with which it is endued.

You used, Sophia, to be a good girl, and therefore it is in a great measure owing to that I am so impatient, on your setting your face against my favorite scheme—but come—sit down, and let me endeavour to persuade you to prefer your own interest to every idle idea of daughterly conduct; for you may believe me, nature never intended children should be the dupes of wicked, any more than the slaves of tyrannic parents; and this gentleman—

Name him not, Sir, for it is the rock on which your kindness for me must ever split, and my obedience be wretched beyond redemption—But why,
Sir,

Sir, drive me from you, or disturb yourself about the behaviour of a girl?—What have I to do with party?—My voice is no suffrage, my opinion of no weight, my character wholly an inactive one.

Do not, Sophia, labour so hard to undervalue yourself: you have talents that must either be mischievously or gloriously exercised: I therefore am anxious to throw you into such a situation, as may enable you to shine forth an ornament to your country, and an honour to your family; and you can never be so unlike all the rest of your sex, as to have neither ambition nor vanity in your composition.

Well but, Sir, only consider the impossibility of a young woman, educated as I have been, abstracted from every other consideration, receiving a total stranger instantaneously for a husband—some previous acquaintance ought surely to be permitted, some—

You

You must not hope to play upon me that way ; I see your fly, but perhaps you will say honest artifice ; but I have so little notion of love matters, that you cannot impose upon me by your shilly shally tricks, and your yes, or no, settles the point for ever.

Unhesitatingly then, I would add fearlessly, but that my dis-union with you will much afflict me, I answer, no ! — I never will consent to be bought or sold ; and be assured, Sir, that if you cast me off for this defence of my natural freedom, as an individual, as I have already hinted to you, nothing but a tide of prosperity, or your condescending invitation, shall bring me again into your presence.

Well then, Madam, you, with your absurd, your very far fetched ideas of duty and freedom, may retire, and I have only to bring your brother to trial, to determine my future connexion with,
or

or alienation from my nearest relations.

Though I had spoke my resolves with a kind of honest heroism, my heart was so full on quitting a mansion where I had spent so many happy days, and in which I must leave a beloved, though scarcely loving relation (for I well knew I should never be permitted to visit the wife, when I had mortally offended the husband) that I could not restrain myself from bursting into tears.

My uncle was moved—Why will you, Sophia, said he, persist in doing violence to yourself, and distressing me?—I once more hold out my hand to you, and beware of rejecting it.

On my knees, dear Sir, let me beseech you to pity and forgive me:—recollect all the innocent, the genuine instances you have received of my affection, and do not punish a conscientious conduct with the severity you threaten. Give me at least the
chance

chance of being refused by your friend —our tastes may not be similar ; my humour may displease him ; my person be ineligible---by his refusal then let me stand or fall, and think what that request implies, without urging me further.

You do as you please with me I think, said he, raising and kissing me, but do not flatter yourself with the hope of escaping by means of my friend's disapprobation, for I am well assured he will think himself infinitely indebted to me for such a wife.

But, my dear Emma, I will tell you my dependance: I will throw such occasions in his way of disgust, with respect to my dress, manners, principles and sentiments, that he shall be glad to concur with my wishes ; nor will you advise me to despair, when I add, that the loan of the thousands he stands in need of will be granted previous to our encounter.

We

We parted at length on very good terms, and my heart whispers me I shall be victorious. But what a strange scheme this!—Because a worthy patriot is reduced to the necessity of mortgaging his acres, he must be tendered a wife, to involve them still deeper; for wives, we must be sensible, (if women of spirit) are most expensive appendages.

The election adventurer, our visitant, is become very unfociable, from what cause I know not—I really had begun to apprehend a husband from that quarter, but his change of behaviour, and my father's relaxed dignity, make me hope better things.

My uncle seems beyond measure to pique himself on the service he has rendered his country, by bringing this new stripling candidate into the House—I should like to be informed, however, after what manner he conceives that circumstance can be serviceable
in

in promoting the cause of freedom, or stemming the torrent of despotism. The House of Commons, if I mistake not, consists of near six hundred members, out of which we hear of three or four individuals that bawl away on liberty ground. Their brother representatives, it is true, give them a hearing, and the people have the pleasure of reading their judicious harangues, but there ends the use of all opposition, and consequently begins the abuse of the people. Our constitution, even I your female friend am sensible, is a happy constitution, according to the tenor and spirit of its original construction; and so are our laws, in like manner, the wisest and most salutary that were ever established: but so long as the former may be violated with impunity, and the latter perverted from their due course, to answer private purposes, with safety, I must be of opi-

nion, that we ought as little to boast of the one, as we have little reason to glory in the other.

My political knowledge is however at present merely historical, if I do not take my newspaper intelligence into the account.—We shall hear how my brother states the case, and whether we ought most to laugh or weep at political absurdities: the true complexion of things will be preserved in his description of them; for as none are bubbles but those who are engaged in the farce, a stander by, if he be an honest man, makes just and rational distinctions. It is necessary for the mind to have some dissipation, and this is the only subject on which mine is enabled to dissipate, from being in fact the only one that for years I have ever heard discussed, or have had an opportunity of discussing, except at those happy periods when you was my companion—
heigho!—

heigho!—that recollection has such a mixture of pleasure and pain in it, that I will conclude my letter, and try to shake it off.

I am, &c.

S. FIELDING.

LETTER X.

MISS SIDNEY TO MISS FIELDING.

ALL my new acquaintance agree, Sophia, that your brother would be a very pretty fellow, if he had only a slight dash of the coxcomb in his composition; but that as he now stands, so sentimental and so unassuming, so judicious and so respectful, one can scarcely enter into the idea that he ought to be admitted at the tea-table; and yet I can assure you, which is somewhat

strange, he is our constant and most desired visitant. My mother hangs on his sober descriptions as if he was an oracle, and my grand-mother protests he is a most valuable companion.—As to me, it is my daily endeavour to brush him up to the satisfaction of my polite friends; for though I must confess I am not yet polished into a taste for your *petit-maitres*, I can perceive all your brother's deficiencies, and good-naturedly wish to supply them. Then again, I have seen one or two men of spirit—O Jupiter! how unlike a man of spirit is your brother! never taking up a single wager, never saying a lively (that is, a licentious) thing, nor ever confirming his assertions with an oath: indeed I frequently blush for him, but in a more particular manner on his seating himself at the card table, when I overheard him profess himself a friend to
a low

a low stake. He has escorted me to a play, and there I was absolutely ashamed of him: for, Sophia, notwithstanding it is notoriously the fashion for all polite people to be unconcerned spectators of such fine wrought scenes of woe as the scenes in the tragedy of Oroonoko, his sensibility was every thing you can conceive of the rustic, except audible, and I believe even in that respect he did himself great violence — This, you must perceive, will never do: one might content ones-self with a little awkwardness, but such substantial disgrace is insupportable, and so I intend to discourse him accordingly.

He already thinks very meanly, I fancy I might say profanely, of the dignity of levees — The cringe of supplication, the shrug of security, the tremor of the unpractised, and the flier of the hardened attendant, all seem to hurt his nice feelings.

My mother asked him last night, what train his hopes were in? he replied, as remote as she could possibly imagine from accomplishment; for madam, continued he, as I have neither been announced a purchaser, nor am set up as an honorary exchange, I shall have years before me to perfect myself in a knowledge of the great world.

My mother smiled, and seemed to understand him, though I confess I was not so clever; but I suppose he will explain himself at large in his epistles to you on these subjects, and as I find I am not without curiosity, I will thus early bespeak the indulgence of reading all he writes, for I know you have not a reserve from me in any respect.

This person of mine, from the sole merit of being unworn in the public eye, has its attractions: a nobleman was pleased to do me the honour
of

of treating me like a fool, by telling me how charming I was; I was nevertheless even with him, and by profusion of grateful acknowledgements, threw him into a profound reverie, not being able clearly to distinguish whether I rallied or was in earnest. But these men, my dear, seem to conceive it incumbent upon them to make idle speeches, and have all the compliments at their finger ends, in like manner as you the articles of your Christian faith: I will fight them, I am resolved, at their own weapons; and whenever they celebrate my person, extol their understanding, and I think we shall mutually discharge our polite obligations.

Yet, my Sophia, I could almost be melancholy at the growing distresses of the nation I love. Full as our granaries are, in all parts of Great Britain, and plentifully as the crops annually gathered have undeniably

been found, yet an artificial famine has overspread the land, and wretchedness set its seal on two thirds of the community.

I make all possible enquiry, in order to come at the source of this terrible calamity, but in vain; and all I can pick out is as follows:

London, not from its natural population, but exports from the continent, has, on a moderate computation, treble the number of inhabitants to former centuries—in a word, you never saw so motley a scene, Jews, Turks, French, Dutch, &c. &c. all jumbled together, and scratching hard to defeat the industry, or exceed the ingenuity of the natives of this unfortunate kingdom. The consequence of which is, that our established manufactures languish, and the employment of the artist so little alive, that a whole week's wages are so inadequate to the exorbitant prices of the markets,

markets, that hundreds of families pass months without tasting animal food, and can barely provide their little ones with bread.

All this has been represented to the sovereign—but it is not the *ton* at court to listen (though for a poor moment) to the voice of poverty: and as it is a maxim, that to encourage one set of beggars is only to draw on another, these unspeakable sufferers were driven back *in terrorem*, in the first instance, and continue undressed.

Your favourite queen Bess would have acted very differently: for having learned the distress of her subjects, she would not have remained long uninformed of the cause. If multitudes were to be fed, she would have devised means to extend those essential labours to the community, agriculture and the propagation of animal subsistence; and neither have

suffered the few to grow rich on the ruin of the many, by bills of enclosure, nor the farmers to have made the breeding of horses the principal occupation of their farms.

I am not an enemy to the sons and daughters of humanity, of whatever nation or complexion.—Let them find an asylum amongst us, but let them be tied down from doing us mischief. If they eat the bread of the natives, they surely ought to share their labours; and not, whilst the worthy hind toils through the day for his miserable eighteen-pence or a shilling, suffer a French hair-dresser to be paid five shillings per hour for his performances, with the manifold, &c. your imagination will suggest. My grandmother has indeed so little of the modern about her, that her cook, her chamber-maid, and her porter, those three offices which foreigners seem to have made their own in most genteel families,

lies, are one and all occupied by English—Yet who can wonder at the polite fascination? when even the housemaid, a few hours after my arrival, could turn up her nose on my desiring to be accommodated with an English hair-dresser, and mutter something about country breeding, and rustic education. I was for catechising her on the occasion, as I love dearly, as Pope says, to “catch the manners living as they rise:” but my mother’s benevolent observations silenced me, though I own not without some secret murmurings, from thinking there was no great danger of shocking a lady of such feelings.

I perceive clearly I am trifling, but I hope you will do me the justice to believe I trifle for your amusement. Ten thousand thanks for putting it in my power to set a worthy heart at rest, on such cheap terms as promoting my own happiness. I am

impatient for Miss Granville's arrival, and beg, if you can so contrive it as not to bring yourself into a scrape, that you will put me in the way to make her father an acceptable present—I say acceptable, because, my Sophia, there are minds (and I must conceive his to be one of them) that ought to be spared by those who assume so much superiority as to do them a kindness; but your own delicate sensibility will teach you my meaning, and equally secure me from offering, and him from sustaining what is unworthy of us.—On my word, there is your brother, I fly to receive him—and I can only add that

I am, &c.

E. SIDNEY.

LET-

LETTER XI.

MR. FIELDING TO MISS FIELDING.

YOU wish, my dear sister, to be informed of the kind of life I lead in this my exile—Truly it is a strange one: my mornings are spent in politics, and my evenings in cards; but as you know the former is a work of necessity, I need only assure you, that the latter is to the full as harmless as the whistling of Dryden's clown, and on nearly the same principle. I should however mention, that Mrs. Sidney encourages me in the most obliging manner to be frequent in my visits to her family, which makes me ample amends for all the other violence I do my inclination.

My father's credentials obtained me a private audience with Lord Ruleall, which I understand is a singular

gular honour, the generality of his dependants in my way being received by proxy, and by proxy receive their final sentence. I could perceive my rustic air was by no means an agreeable surprise to his lordship. His manner was indeed reserved, but I presume patronising, and he spoke of my father in very high terms. He felt for ground with respect to my pliability of soul, and shrunk back on meeting with very little success.—He however told me, that he should be glad to see me as often as it was convenient; but, as his time was much taken up, it was possible that, except on levee days, I might find myself rather the visitant of his family than himself.—I bowed low in token of my respect and gratitude, and soon after took my leave. My lord may rest satisfied, that beyond my father's peremptory commands, he will not find me troublesome,

blesome, for I can already perceive that my mind would refuse acquaintance with him.

His spirit and his wisdom are nevertheless held in high repute, by every court dangler, and honest North-Briton; but in order to assist your judgment, I will give you a specimen of the ideas and principles of his adherents.

The rein should be pulled tight when the people are licentious; and their duty inculcated by stripes, when other methods are unsuccessful.

But give me leave, Sir, said I, to the smart gentleman who had thus begun to harangue the company, and I could see was going to strike up a panegyric on the merits of the great lord who had the honour to be his countryman; give me leave to ask you, if it would not be the safer, consequently the more eligible method,
to

to win the affections, than excite the fears of the community. The sovereign (but I confess the tenet is somewhat antiquated) is alike glorious and happy, that rules in the hearts of his subjects.

All this, Sir, was very pretty at the period when it was practicable : but perhaps you are so little an adept in politics, as not to be aware of the causes, which have, from changing the manners of the people, changed the measures of government.

Upon my honour, Sir, you do not mis-read me ; and I will thank you for information.

In the earlier ages of monarchy, resumed this political orator, the necessary arts of governing were traditional, not recorded truths—thus princes sway ; thus subjects submit—and in those few words was the whole national allegiance comprehended.

hended. But no sooner had some frantic pedagogue rendered the knowledge of letters universal, than every leather-aproned individual in the community became a politician; queries were put forth, the whys and wherefores of administration attempted to be decyphered, and the confined capacity of a mob set up as the true standard of right and wrong in the proceedings of the sovereign.

And can you, Sir, born in a nation which has ever been celebrated for the universality of its schools, condemn the practice in a neighbouring country?—The Scotch have at all times been remarkable for their learning, however occasionally impeachable for their loyalty.

You will please, Sir, to keep clear of national reflections.

But, Sir, if it is not incompatible with your dignity, do me the favour
to

to explain the point from which I have started you by a natural observation.

Why, Sir, as I was saying, freedom in the year 1760 odd is quite another thing to freedom some half dozen preceding centuries; your inferior people, undebauched by sedition, asked no other indulgence at the hands of the sovereign than the enjoyment of their property, nor other protection than the security of their persons—and being possessed of these two essentials to their well-being, cheerfully subscribed to the sovereign's well governing, let the state bark be driven where it would.

I protest, Sir, you are so profound a casuist that comprehension cannot follow you—If the people were permitted to live agreeable to their own inclinations, and had the satisfaction of knowing themselves secure in their persons, according to my idea, it was
their

their duty to bless and praise the author of their felicity: for, Sir, instead of the national bark being at such a period unskilfully steered, it must have been under the direction of an able pilot, unless indeed you are so good a logician as to separate the interests of the king and the interests of the people, so effectually as to leave it possible for the former to be shipwrecked, whilst the latter are merely spectators of the storm.

You are too quick, Sir, in your commentaries, and seem to choose to mistake me into errors. What I mean is, that when supplies were demanded by preceding monarchs, the people did not come in a body and insist upon knowing for what purpose; nor when new laws were enacted, was the nation ever known to be thrown in a flame, except in this present generation, when, like school boys, the public has so long had its head that it will aspire to equality with its master.

Then,

Then, Sir, I suppose you are one of those gentlemen who conceive the king can do no wrong.

I think, nay am convinced, that the commonalty understand very little of that distinction, and therefore do not scruple to pronounce them incompetent judges.

At this rate, Sir, the lower orders of the community are to be mere machines, and derive their motion or rest implicitly from their superiors.

No, Sir, I do not carry things to such violent extremities. All I contend for is, that there is a line which the people ought not to attempt, much less to be permitted to pass. What monarch, Sir, besides a British one, was ever scowled at by his subjects when appearing in public, or braved in his palace surrounded by his guards?

Oppression, Sir, is a severe schoolmaster—but I beg your pardon, we cannot judge of what we do not feel ;
and

and it is so long since Scotland was a distinct kingdom, that its natives have not an impression of the hardship and provocation undue preferences are to feeling minds.

This, Sir, is not fair argument ; we should throw self out of the question, when we are arguing on public ground.

I am intirely of that opinion, and therefore conceive it an impropriety for a gentleman to pronounce decisively on a point it is impossible he should understand. The English apprehend themselves in danger of losing their actual birth-right, by adopting the very submission the Scotch find most convenient in advancing their best interests: it therefore follows that neither you nor I can be right according to each others idea, if we decide from our partial conception of things.

Since

Since my system is so offensive to you, will you take the trouble to instruct me how the balance between the dignity of the sovereign and the subordination of the subject is to be preserved, if all their bold claims to freedom are to be complied with? But perhaps you are an advocate for their subscribing only to such articles as are agreeable to their inclinations, without any regard to the fitness or unfitness of things.

I think it, Sir, incumbent on the sovereign, to keep up the appearance, on all occasions, of having the good of his people at heart: now I surely need not observe, that if a sovereign can permit himself to be either flattered or intimidated by the court into granting the royal sanction to laws which are immediately baneful to the public interest, and in a more particular manner, to the interest of those ranks of the community who have little or nothing left them they can

call their own, the idea must naturally be, that war is indirectly declared, and that the best props of government are despised and disregarded.

I find, Sir, I am talking with a patriot, instead of a private gentleman; and take my word for it, your doctrine is calculated to lift you into popularity whenever you are disposed to promulgate it.

What then you think the people have no natural rights, the violation of which can entitle them to disturb the repose of the court, much less render them so bold as to knock at the bosom of royalty for justice?

I think each man, Sir, ought to follow his occupation, so long as he can do it uninterruptedly; and to understand his exemption from interruption, as the reward of his peaceable and unoffending demeanour, nor lose his days in unavailing clamour, his nights in idle projects; for
peti-

petitions and remonstrances are deservedly disregarded, when they result from sedition, and are the fabrication of rebellion.

And is there then an individual, whose soul is in such a state of apathy, as to behold the miseries of his brother individual, unmoved?

Miseries—you must forgive my smiling—but I should be happy to know what miseries the people of this island can labour under?

Their decay of trade—but perhaps, Sir, that is a circumstance you have never adverted to;—their intolerable taxes—but those I suppose you will call the rights of royalty:—the practice of forestallers, by which the poor are compelled to view those necessities of life, which they must never hope to taste—but you will probably style this a piece of good policy to keep them in a state of subjection:—the increase of landed power,

power, and the consequential strides daily made towards the renovation of those horrid distinctions, lordships and vassalage, which once prevailed in this now free kingdom—but this article I can guess your idea of:—the augmentation of placemen—I do not however expect you to acknowledge that to be an evil:—the subservience of the representative body to the Lords, whose interests are so diametrically opposite to those of the lesser orders of mankind, that the medium was struck out by means of a House of Commons, to defend them from the encroachments of the tyrant nobility.

Upon my word, Sir, if you can despise what has at all periods been found a necessary subordination in the kingdom, would level princes with citizens, and lords with mechanicks, I know not how to talk to you, my political faith having not the least

tincture in it of Hobbes's state of nature.

Thus, Sophia, you see every thing was right in this gentleman's opinion, that had the sanction of the great for its passport, and every thing wrong that opposed their haughty will and pleasure.

Having spun this letter to an usual length, I shall take some future opportunity to convince you that there is a wide difference between reasoning and disputation, between truth and opinion, between caprice and necessity, which, nevertheless, are the fundamentals of all party, at the present period; that passion and prejudice operate with equal force on the patriot and the court minion, the Englishman and the Scotchman, on all occasions.

Be assured, I am as well as you could wish me to be, and as happy as
the

TO MISS FIELDING. 123

the peculiarity of my condition will admit, as also, most truly, &c.

H. FIELDING.

LETTER XII.

MISS SIDNEY TO MISS FIELDING.

SO then married you are to be at all events; and the only remaining question is, whether patriot or anti-patriot shall be the husband of your choice—but, in my humble opinion, if you are wise, you will not make a moment's hesitation to prefer the fool of fortune to the fool of a party, and fly to London with all possible expedition.

O! you cannot have the least idea of the *eclat* that attends youth and beauty in polite circles; crowds
G 2 obey-

obeying one's nod, coxcombs cringing to be approved, knaves flattering to betray, fops chattering to amuse, and bullies swearing to prove their capability to protect you from insult—on my word it is delightful—and then to hear the mischiefs one's eyes effect, especially as it is such harmless mischief, that the wounded are the easiest persons in the whole farce—there is no describing the felicity.

But, my dear, take notice, that, if you are all for love, after the example of antiquity, you must prepare yourself for the same pliability of manners you perceive in your consort—His soul is not withheld from his patron; you would therefore never be so unreasonable as to withhold your person, was it to become an object of desire in that quarter.—A handsome wife is deemed a master-key to advancement, in a court of gallantry; and I should not despair of seeing
your

your husband at the top of the Treasury clerks, provided you had the grace of humility, and the virtue of condescension duely before your eyes.

As for the patriot, having taken him from motives of convenience, what more natural than that you should take some other from motives of choice?—The principles once prostituted, the integrity of the heart once violated, and all is over!—Once and a million! emphatically says our Shakespeare, and the woman who professedly weds from lucrative motives, cannot, by the utmost stretch of charity, be conceived to have a very delicate conscience, because, my dear, there is so ugly a thing as an oath between her and the gratification of her avarice, and it is only by insulting the Deity at his altar, that she has claims to a share in her husband's possessions.

But I crave your mercy ; your uncle, though a married man, has a mind so peculiarly base that it gives him as little intimation of the union of hearts, as his forgetfulness of the marriage ceremony does of the union of hands—But peace to such men, say I, if such men can have peace, and heaven preserve my all-amiable friend from falling a victim to any of their wiles !

Would you believe it ? unable as I am to divine the cause, my mother is for becoming a candidate for a son-in-law in your brother, and this too before she has sought to inform herself whether that alliance would not break in upon some of his favourite schemes. But, if she takes a single step to promote what she professes so ardently to wish, rebellion, yes, Sophia, downright open rebellion, shall be the consequence. I have no notion of fathers and mothers setting these

these things a-going, from conceiving their grand prerogative to be a negative voice.—Did she indeed perceive, that I was in the train of bestowing my heart on an unworthy object, it would be high time to busy herself; but surely no young woman ought to be precipitated into aukward, not to say indelicate circumstances, by any parental anticipation of what is, perhaps, but too probable a contingency—And thus I state the case :

Your brother is a smart youth, your friend a spruce maiden:—he has his peculiarities, she has her peculiarities, with respect to all the world beside; but the most perfect concurrence in each others tastes and sentiments:—he has fine prospects, she tolerable possessions—he has the faculty of speech, she the gift of hearing—time and opportunity are both his friends—and the

young people's inclinations ought to settle the rest. I can solemnly declare, that was it so ordered by the ill-judged kindness of my mother, or the injudicious interference of my dearest friend, that a man must presuppose me a love-sick damsel, to his declarations in my favour, though all my felicity was hinged on my acceptance of him, I would refuse him for ever and for ever.

Your lovely and barbarously persecuted neighbour is now my elegant waiting-woman, and my heart-acknowledged friend. She speaks so tenderly of her father, and so respectfully of you; laments not condemns the rage that has hunted her out of a blessed obscurity into all the dangers of a bad world, that I own I was never so perfectly pleased with any person in my whole life; and I hope I shall have so much grace,

as

as to save her from repenting her putting herself under my protection.

My mother has taken herself to uncle William, in order to try her rhetoric on so untoward a subject; she, however, beheld my Fanny (for she intreats the name of Granville may be refused) before her departure, and gently bid me remember, how I myself, if reduced to a dependent situation, would wish to be treated—I will, my dear mother, remember an admonition so perfectly agreeable to my wishes—And so the good lady took her leave.

Should you ever be reduced to very great extremities, William Sidney, I dare believe, would take compassion on you; for, my dear, so abundant is his vanity, that he would credit the report that you was dying for his sake; and, to do him justice, so great is his good nature, that he

would not let an insect expire if he could preserve it.

You know, if nature has been generous to me in any of her behests, it is in my head of hair—very well—Now, what says the fashionable hair-dresser—that unless a lady will permit him to build her a tower of curls on each side her pate, and puff a sufficient quantity of blue powder—blue—yes, blue powder about her ears, to render this ornament an actual deformity, she has a vulgar taste, a pusillanimous spirit, and is fit only for the business of spinning, knitting, or saying her prayers.

Then fancy to yourself, that I, your friend, according to the established mode, am become taller by some six inches than when I left the country—that my auburn locks are as blue as a billberry, my shoulders up to my ears from the height of my stays, with many &c's, that I
leave

leave to your own imagination—You laugh, and call to mind Horace's description of heads of beasts, and feathers of birds, and think the creature mad—But, Sophia, you laugh prematurely; for know, that I have undergone only a trifling metamorphosis, and that too of such a kind as rather to assist than counter-act the work of nature.

But perhaps you think I am still in Great-Britain—no such thing, I assure you—It is true, indeed, that London is still called London; but French modes, French manners, French servants, and the French language, sufficiently testify, that London is only a hasty edition of Paris.

I was a few evenings ago at a rout—when, Lord bless me, what should I see but a man's face daubed over with pearl powder and rouge, the white and red which you rustics know only by the barbarous name of

G 6 paint!

paint! Your brother stood by me when I made the discovery, that was an equal disgrace to reason, manhood, and flesh and blood—I therefore sought comfort in his face; it was the very thing he was looking for in mine (you will detect the plagiarist) so we could only relieve ourselves by a mental ejaculation.

English, that valuable language, enriched moreover with naturalized (I will not say pilfered) expressions from every language under the sun, will not now serve my turn—*Je parle Francois toujours*, and for my time, as Mr. Bridone says, am allowed to do wonders.

I am astonished at the meanness of a nation, that was once feared and loved in all quarters of the world, thus to fall into the snares of an artful and a fantastical set of people, and renounce their own interest, manners, and morals; because some
infatuated

infatuated woman of fashion has adopted them, together with the national jargon, which is indeed the grand vehicle of all the rest. Do but imagine your ears saluted with, *ah charmante! quelle bête! eh mon adorable!* &c. &c. &c. But you shall come amongst us, and be polished out of your good sense, your love of propriety, your—But all I can tell you, is most imperfectly to describe the improvements you will undergo *à Londres sous les instructions de votre ami.*

No more of politics, for it is as I conjectured; fine ladies are not so masculine as to be politicians. *Son le donne*, they sing Italian, chatter French, and scandalize their neighbours and friends in English.

I was addressed the other day by a very polite spark, *à la Francoise*; who, on my informing him that I did not understand one syllable of the matter, turned

turned disdainfully on his heel, and exclaimed, *ab la barbare!* which you will discover, on looking into your brother's dictionary, was not the most gentle, manly thing he could have said of an unoffending, however unbred gentlewoman — But, ladies and gentlemen — the distinction is scarcely kept up at present — they rally with one and the same spirit, indulge themselves with equal licence in one and the same witticisms, and laugh at every religious tenet with one and the same hardiness — And such, my dear, is London — inasmuch that I cannot help thinking, from morning to night, and from night to morning, that though my fair country-women, of this generation, may do very well (as Smart says) for sisters and aunts, they are beyond measure unfit for wives.

My idolized Garrick! (for during ages to come, we must not hope to

see his like again) that he would but let me have the honour of correcting one or two mal-practices, which he, even he, is guilty of! But, to moderate your wonder, only recollect, my dear, that there are spots in the sun. So incomparable a judge, and so masterly a performer! why will Mr. Garrick ever make us love what we ought to hate, and delighted with what we ought to condemn?—I blush to tell you, but from the sanction of his name in the bills, I have seen his Sir John Brute, and his Don Leon; and may you ever escape similar confusion. The rustic believed every eye was turned upon her, at every gross attack that was made on her ear, and would have given worlds to have left the house, though she left her favourite Garrick behind her. Let this be a caution to you, that there is no perfection on earth, and to rely wholly on your own judgment,

judgment, supported by every possible information, on all such occasions.

But twice? you say, twice? was not the first time sufficient to put me on my guard?—My dear Sophia, the truth is, that having blushed for me, you must blush a still deeper die for the generality of your sex—no less than six ladies assured me I should be highly entertained, and as a proof that they spoke as they thought, five out of the six attended me, and I verily believe there were four women to one man all the house over. I have never had the courage to enter upon the subject with your brother, so can only guess at his sentiments, and most sincerely wish I was of so much importance as to be able to make a party against this great little man; a thin house, a house without a single female in it, should soon bespeak our (that is the sex's) displeasure, and teach him to respect himself and us.

Your

Your brother told me, the last time I saw him, that our Sophia was, she informed him, tolerably happy; and a fraternal sigh finished the sentence— But such, nevertheless, is his nice sense of duty, that he seems more inclined to complain of fate, than the wrongheadedness of his relations— though, between ourselves, that is a miserable salve for a tender conscience, as, if we mean any thing by that word, we certainly understand it to be Providence, the superintending and the over-ruling Providence: so you must confess I have the advantage of him in morality, however he may have the start of me in the walk of filial reverence. I am sure for my part I have many obligations to your family—for had your relations been wise and generous, and so forth, my smooth life would have left me too uncollected for a mortal being; whereas now, from not being able to comprehend
the

the mischiefs their perverse humour is perpetually heaping on the heads of the innocent, I make many deep and serious reflections; and that I may secure myself from the dreadful impiety of arraigning the Deity, or impeaching his attributes, I conclude with my favourite Pope, that,

All nature is but art unknown to me,
All chance, direction which I cannot see,
All discord, harmony not understood,
All partial evil, universal good,
And spite of pride, in erring nature's spite,
One truth is clear, whatever is is right.

I expect you to admire my ingenuity in the alteration I have made in the above lines, with respect to the *applicability* to our case, though only of persons and monosyllables — Ah, Sophia, how much pains, useless pains, have you and I taken! for it is sufficient qualification for moving in polite life, to be acquainted with Hoyle, to know how to dance allemands

mands and cotillions, and to have conquered that mark of meanness and low breeding, blushing at every smart thing that is uttered, because a little livelier or a little freer than one has been accustomed to—My smattering in natural philosophy, my trifling knowledge of grammar, my *en-passant* acquaintance with history—I dare not name them, lest I should be stigmatized for a female pedant, and shunned as an owl amongst the birds.

Uninformed in all polite matters did I visit this overgrown city; heaven grant I may return uncontaminated by the least of its follies—and you and I, my dear, will celebrate the blessing, and dedicate our future days to the feast of reason and the flow of soul.

Adieu and adieu,

E. SIDNEY.

LETTER

LETTER XIII.

MISS FIELDING TO MISS SIDNEY.

IT is plain, my dear girl, that as I am in a state of mortification, you are at this period in a state of temptation; but I rely on the goodness of your understanding and the solidity of your principles to save you, as you justly phrase it, from being contaminated — and heaven pardon those I say that could be capable of vitiating such a mind as yours.

We are now up to the elbows in politics, or what I believe may more properly be called preparations against the general election; when my father declaredly flatters himself he shall be able, like a second Sir Francis Wronghead, to lick himself whole again, though I verily believe he will only hasten his destruction. How,
Emma,

Emma, shall I ever behold his face when bearing honest testimony to his heart-reproaching pangs! for the enchantment must be dissolved, and the goblin poverty scare him from place to place.

Tolerably happy—Pray take the trouble to tell my brother he must rise abundantly in his expressions, if he would characterise my present situation—for I am the oracle of my father, and the factotum of my uncle. With the former I agree that the rabble ought to be scourged into good order, and with the latter that bawling is the health of the constitution. My father affirms that majesty ought to support its dignity, and my uncle that princes have been compelled to abdicate for a much less stretch of what is called prerogative, than our present S—— has been betrayed into by the advice of bad ministers.

My

My father calls Lord Ruleall an able statesman; my uncle pins the salvation of the kingdom on Mr. Stickler's sleeve. My father thinks the court is right in carrying things with a high hand; and my uncle insists upon it, that to do themselves justice, the citizens should level the walls of the palace—Thus, by conducting myself agreeably to St. Paul's maxim; viz. becoming all things to all men, I go cheerily on; and to add to my tranquillity, the prig of a candidate is not only decamped, but the coast uninvaded by the patriot—so that matrimony seems to be a voyage I shall not have an opportunity of making for some months to come. My father begins, I can perceive, to think his court friends rather tardy in not creating a vacancy for my brother; for that no place is yet vacant, he has received the most solemn assurances—and yet, Emma, his attendance has
been

been short in comparison of what I have heard described, for it is not yet quite two months by any calendar, except that of friendship, since he left the country.

I do not pretend to possess supernatural gifts, yet to conform myself to your polite humour, and express myself a-la-mode, I will own to you I have my *presentiment* that his present pursuits will not be successful. Courtiers are very proverbs for ingratitude—Had he indeed started in the meridian of my father's services he might have stood some chance, but the fatal secret, depend upon it, has by some means or other transpired, and his services together with his fortune known to be in the wane.

My *dernier* resort then is my uncle, and Henry shall not want a warm advocate—His possessions are immense, if his turn of mind is somewhat whimsical,

fical, and we must make the best of him.

You certainly take the method to make me lament my detention in the country—such a fools paradise—but from persuading myself your soul as to virtue partakes of the nature of the salamander, I will not, I repeat, fear for you, tho' in the midst of flames.

The gentle Henry say you—the rational Henry say I—how is he able to accommodate himself to his situation?—So motly a scene as life must appear to him, now immersed in politics, and now plunged into the ridiculous—But I can only wish him and all those persons most dear to him safe once more in the country.

My uncle says, if Mr. Stickler is but brought into the House, all will go as it should do—what infatuation—for unhappily Mr. Stickler's best friends confess he has not the least pretensions to oratory, and must as now reserve his thunders for the press.

My

My father, who speaks with a degree of confidence that would almost betray you into the belief that he was in the secret, positively asserts that the court will so manage it, that if Mr. Stickler is even elected, he will never be permitted to take his seat.

But how, my dear Sir, will they prevent it, when, if I apprehend right, the suffrages of the people, not the humour of the court, must determine that point?

But should they, Sophia, meet with a man of sufficient spirit to oppose him.

What then, Sir? If he has the majority in his favour, the right of election, that fundamental of the British constitution, must be either violated, or Mr. Stickler become triumphant.

There may, I tell you, be ways and means, if a man of spirit—

But a man of honour, Sir, will never be so far aiding and assisting in

the ruin of his country as to close with base designs, or—

I will tell you a secret, Sophia :—it has been proposed to me—

Sir, dear Sir, consider—

If I can have it made appear to me that the opposition is honorable, I shall despise its peril ; but on dishonorable ground, rest assured your father will not consent to start.

Then, Sir, all is lost—for I am well persuaded none are for the purposes of the court, who look into their deeds with *thinking* eyes.

You alarm yourself without a cause—I have proved myself sufficiently the friend of the court (without being a knave) to secure me from being considered its enemy, if an opportunity should offer of my scorning any dirty work, and you may perfectly hush your apprehensions on that account.

But

But my apprehensions, Emma, as they are seldom excited without a cause, are not to be calmed without a reason—My father as a desperate man will be expected to catch at every twig, and I can without witchcraft see so far into the fate of things, that if his honesty is retained all his court expectancies will be forfeited. How will my uncle then exult, with a heart hardened against my father's necessities, whilst I can do nothing but weep under such trying, such irretrievable circumstances!

How often am I tempted, when alone with this uncle, to throw myself at his feet, and though spurned, continue to plead the cause of nature and my father! How can one man, who is hurried to the greatest excesses by party zeal, condemn a similar conduct in another?—But the misery is, that my father's disposition has plunged him into a calamity, from which

my uncle's strength of mind has for ever preserved him; for greatly as he loves his country, he loves his independence too well to sacrifice it in its service, whilst my father has devoted his all to the opposite partizans—My father therefore has been duped, whilst my uncle has been only amused; my father received wounds, whilst my uncle has been merely trifling; and according to my idea, his claims on the court are doubly strong, on that maxim that

“ He who parts with money never feigns.”

But I must tell you I have formed a kind of random scheme in case of the last exigence, as romantic, perhaps, as any of those the goodness and the inexperience of your own heart could suggest—and that is, not to let my father fall, if fall he must, without his sovereign's knowledge, and as I may call it concurrence. His majesty is said to possess, in an abundant

dant degree, all those softer virtues that adorn private life, in the catalogue of whom ingratitude never dared to shew its head : it was in the interest of his family, if not immediately in that of his person, that he has been undone ; nay the finishing stroke, that renders him a victim to his principles, will fall upon him in his reign, and I hope in a particular manner mark his character for compassion and benevolence.

Yet the more I think, the more I am bewildered. Mr. Stickler, as a friend to the constitution, and as a man of enterprize, will no doubt go every possible length with the popular voice : but should it appear that the court, rather than be defeated in a favourite point, are resolved to violate all the best privileges of the people, and establish a precedent which every lover of his country must tremble at the bare idea of, as the friend of his country he will infallibly make a timely retreat,

and in order to avert so mortal a stab to the constitution, if victory must be theirs, contrive to give it them on the least dangerous terms. On this view of things, if my father chooses to stand forth the friend of the court, there could be little harm done; but should Mr. Stickler be capable of persevering, and having shewn the people the lengths bad men will run in the promotion of bad purposes, depart so glaringly from the patriotic character, as to become the instrument of their diabolical deeds, then would my father be rendered an object of contempt, and the reproach of his conduct could never be wiped away.

I cannot, nevertheless, but trust to Mr. Stickler's public principles, and well known good sense, for our safety. He is too happily informed of the uses and limitations of opposition to raise hopes that must inevitably be disappointed. At present he is an injured

jured and a persecuted man—but if I read him right, not for his country's sake, but the manly firmness of his heart. We should not, Emma, confound the individual with the cause—having once avowed his party tenets, having once devoted his pen to the merits of liberty, he could not make an inglorious retreat, and in order to follow the fortune of his illustrious friend, imitate his conduct and join hands with the very persons he had held forth as the enemies of the British Empire.

It is indeed asserted by my father that it was his patron who in the true courtier style shook him off, though the patriots give us to understand that he renounced his patron—but I never subscribe literally to party reports, from having received proofs, that to extenuate, or exaggerate, is the universal practice on both sides.

Mr. Stickler, I dare believe, will however explain himself nobly to the

people, and teach them to distinguish between the champion and the friend of their liberties. As the friend he may justly assure them of his best services and his best wishes, but the champion must do more—he must possess the necessary abilities for giving him at least a chance for conquest, or he is a deceiver and a madman; and need I observe that where the combat is so unequal, as one man against a multitude, he must much rather answer the purposes of the court, by keeping the people in play, than be able to annoy them essentially by any manœuvre in the great cause of liberty.

This, you will perhaps however tell me, may be reason, but it is not politics—Do not be satirical, Emma, for popular matters are too important to be sported with, and the miseries of the community too serious a consideration to be trifled with.

I was

I was drawn in by the peculiarity of my situation to make these masculine affairs my study, but am now, my dear, becoming an interested party in them ; the fate of my father, and my father's family being so nearly connected with, and so nearly brought to a crisis by this state farce.

That elections on their original institution were glorious things, I can easily comprehend—There were (if I may so express myself) three distinct interests in the nation—of the crown, of the nobles, and of the populace—Now to blend and to unite, to render them a check and an aid to each other, was the great object of deliberation, and wisely at length resolved into the three powers we find them. The presumption of kings was even then pretty clearly understood ; the pride of the nobles, who had an hereditary share in the legislation, alarmingly ascertained—what balance then

H 5 remained

remained for the security of the people's rights, but their privilege of election? Every county by its own suffrages was to have its own representative, to watch over the constitution, and preserve it alike from the innovations of tyranny and the inroads of oppression.

The taxation, the superintendency of trade, the exigencies of war, and the blessings of peace, were the immediate and more peculiar objects of their consideration and regulation.— Thus far all was equal, just and happy, and the link between the different orders of the community finely preserved.

But unfortunately it was not long before the present good became, in the hearts of the avaritious, the weak, the self-interested, and the wicked, the grand object. The temporary was madly preferred to the permanent. The candidate, prompted to try how far money would counterbalance the merits

merits of his opponent, first began the corruption, and the electors, dazzled by a view of the fatal ore, became corruptible, and sold themselves and their posterity for a price.

Yet a glorious renovation of the constitution is within the power of the people, on the expiration of each succeeding seven years, and I do therefore expect Mr. Stickler will tell his beloved countrymen, that though pique and superior force may prove an insuperable bar to his ever obtaining a seat in the House, that he can doubly and trebly serve them, by pointing out, as occasion may require, the conduct their representatives ought to pursue—a conduct that will be cheerfully adopted by all such men as deserve to enjoy the honour of the representation.

Still, still, you will say, anticipating; the cause will sufficiently excuse the effect, for let me be once disengaged

H 6 from

from public transactions and I will become so properly feminine as never to trouble myself about them.

Harry (but his feelings we know are much too delicate for his situation) complains greatly of the drudgery he is compelled to undergo—shouldered by a set of men who consider him their rival, and brow-beaten by those higher ranks who conceive the universe made to do them pleasure.

He observes (and with the utmost naïveté asks me to teach him to account for it) that tho' my Lord Ruleall is exceedingly gracious to him in their private interviews, he always freezes upon him in public, as if afraid to give umbrage to those whose claims upon him are better supported than his, or whose future services promise amply to repay the smile of complacence.—The general election will deliver him from this state of attendance and dependance, whether his hopes or fears are thereby

thereby rendered predominant; and I intreat him to wait that decision with all imaginable patience.

What you tell me concerning your mother's approbation of Henry is the most agreeable piece of news I have received for a long time—His prospects are not then by any means so desperate as I apprehended, provided my uncle's generous dispositions towards him can be kept alive, until your false delicacy will suffer things to be brought to an eclaircissement.

I dare believe that such an alliance would induce the politician to undraw his purse strings with even more liberality than when in pursuit of a borough.—Would to heaven I had leave to try the experiment, and that it was given me to superadd the name of sister to that of

Your affectionate friend,

S. FIELDING.

L E T T E R X I V .

MISS SIDNEY TO MISS FIELDING.

YOUR favourite wish is accomplished, and Henry is now my avowed humble servant: the dread of losing me for ever (and there was a fop or two that seemed to glance an eye that way) overcame all his scruples, and compelled him to speak the tenderest, the most acceptable things: my mother too is in the secret, and highly approves of our affectionate engagement, though, my dear, we are to remain exactly in our present situation, until it is in his power to make other proposals.

I am now perfectly happy; the friendship of the brother, as well as the sister (for love is only a higher kind of friendship) is unspeakably dear to me. I am, you know, very young, and matrimony is a point I
have

have never yet turned my thoughts to; but fools will flutter around the unengaged female, and the world busily dispose of those who do not belong to them: every impertinence of that sort is now at an end, and I am as secure from persecution as absurdity, by this my acknowledged and my authorized prepossession—and you must own my mother is a very sensible woman.

Your brother persuades himself that his father will be happy in the *honour* of my alliance, so soon as he can render himself worthy of me, and his uncle exult in his good fortune on the occasion.—It is a pleasing illusion, and may it be continued to him so long as it is necessary for his happiness.

As for my part, I have my private resolves, which, like the laws of the Medes and Persians, will be found unalterable; but I shall not explain myself farther.

Ours,

Ours, though it cannot be called a religious, will thus, you may perceive, be a rational courtship—None of your improprieties, your private interviews, your warm professions of attachment. We understand it is our intention, as your sea-captains set forth with respect to their time of sailing, God willing, to take each other at some convenient period for life; and have nothing to do, in the mean time, but to cultivate our mutually good opinion, and neither say or do ought that we should blush at the recollection of, or be unwilling the whole world should be acquainted with. This turn of thinking so unlike the romance of lovers, and the fal-lal of common attachments, is, you well know, the only whimsicality I can be charged with; and even there I am not singular, for do you not possess my kindred mind?

Have

Have you not always conceived masquerades most desirable entertainments?—So much wit, so much pleasantry, so much festivity.—No such thing, I can assure you, is the case.—You are sensible I do not want for vivacity, and am seldom at a loss for those smartnesses which, if untinctured by ill-nature, can indeed be called no more than innocent raillery.—Would you then believe it, that with my shepherd's crook in my hand, the sweet simplicity of that character captivating my imagination, I wandered from room to room, without either hearing or obtaining an opportunity of speaking one characteristic thing?

The clowns, my dear, were all speechless, the sultans inanimate, the soldiers cowards, and the harlequins statues. I ventured to address one or two, who gaped and fled, and seemed to understand as little of the Arcadian

dian *naïveté*, as of its delicacy and innocence.

Indeed if I could have permitted myself to have been taken liberties with, and been guilty of so capital a departure from my character, as to enter into the spirit of double entendres, though I could not have passed for a shepherdess, I should have been considered as a lively country lass, who intuitively hit off the metropolitan manners.

Never then, I beseech you, languish for masquerades; for unless you should become capable of delighting in a hot crowded room, or of taking delight in the tricks of a set of senseless merry-andrews, or, what would be stranger still, find yourself desirous of mixing in conversation with the sons and daughters of licentiousness, you can have no business there.

Your brother stared; but being happily in a domino, it was in character

rafter for him to be any thing, or nothing, just as his fancy incited him; and indeed it appeared, from the little observation I was able to make, that the fools of the assembly were all in some characteristic dress, whilst the few sensible ones wrapped themselves up in silence, conscious superiority, and dominos.

You must not, nevertheless, read this paragraph to either male or female of our acquaintance; for though I am convinced I shall never think like a modern fine lady, I cannot consent to be marked down for an antiquated one, and you will therefore, my Sophia, act accordingly.

A young fellow, a fool of fortune, who visits much at my grandmother's, was of our party.

He said abundance of unmeaning things, but apparently considered himself the wit of the company.

I was

I was for giving him the slip many times, that your brother and I, in the midst of that pye-balled assembly, might have enjoyed one rational thought—but it was impossible; wherever we went, he contrived to be still at our elbow; and I verily believe was so weak and so vain as to fancy he was laying us under an obligation by persecuting us with his idle talk. I returned home quite weary; nay, what is much worse, quite petulant: but this fellow had fooled me, as Hamlet says, to the top of my bent, and I wanted retirement and self-recollection. I am afraid my sweet Fanny thought me mad, from never having seen me in so unreasonable a humour: but this town would corrupt a saint, and well may your poor giddy-brained friend be occasionally infected.

What would this fop be at?—
Fanny tells me he is here again,
and

and beyond measure earnest to speak with me.—I must go down and receive him; but he had not best provoke me, or I shall certainly assume so much consequence to myself, as to forbid him the house—for though not immediately my own, it is nearly related to me by belonging to my grandmother.

Heaven and earth! what a block-head!—Here's a rich conquest my bright eyes have made, and the fool will needs obtain the blessing of my hand *nolens volens*. It was in vain that I told him I was engaged—he had the civility to laugh in my face, and as for my mother's sanction, he treated my mention of it quite cavalierly, and denouncing vengeance on his rival's head, so soon as he should discover the man intitled to that appellation, he abruptly withdrew.

I shuddered at his daring and wicked spirit, and sending for your brother,

brother, cautioned him to be upon his guard.

He smiled at the simpleton, and assured me, that though he would never suffer himself to be insulted with impunity, he would on all occasions hold himself as unwilling to give as receive offence; but believe me, my dear madam, continued he, your noisy fellows are the least to be feared of any in the community; for though over-bearing, and accustomed to big words, where they know they can terrify, they are the tamest of all animals when in danger of incurring deserved correction—I am, however, persuaded he is a mischievous wretch, and should your brother's conjectures be well-founded, as to his never having the courage to profess himself his open enemy, will not fail to have ingenuity enough to render himself a secret one—but I will not give him so much importance

as

as to make him any longer the subject of my epistle.

Something more than common is certainly in the wind, for Lord Ruleall has, within these few days, so abundantly relaxed his dignity, as to receive your brother almost with open arms. But it appears to me very clearly, that in order to promote some private purpose or other he is to be kept on the tip-toe of expectation, though probably only to be tumbled into the greater depths of disappointment.—I should be glad, methinks, to penetrate the meaning of all this, if it was only to satisfy one's natural curiosity. Henry's spirits I can perceive are rather elevated on the occasion, but he assures me he will ever hold his mind in that state as to be able to meet either success or misfortune as he ought.

If I could be of your opinion—but it is impossible—I cannot write myself

myself out more intelligibly—nay, I even wish you may not be able, in any degree, to catch my idea.

But I have news for you—My cousin Charles Effingham is on his return from India, exactly the same good young man as when he left us (which is next to a miracle), and as rich as a nabob, by the death of that relation for whose sake he robbed us of his company. He has wrote a most affectionate letter to my mother, wherein he has not omitted due remembrances of my fair friend.

I will not play the match-maker, from that blessed rule of conduct, viz. of not doing as I would not be done by; but as he once owned himself sensible to all the merits of your character, I shall despise him if, now that it is in his power, he does not seek an alliance with them; nay more, shall renounce the relationship.—To the everlasting honour of my mother,
as

as mothers, you know, are generally avaritious, instead of repenting my engagement with your brother, and wishing me to set my cap at the nabob, she rejoices that I am secured from the danger of mistaking fortune for happiness.

If Fanny—but that's impossible; for has he not seen you? and when once fixed, these sentimentalists are fixed for life.

My uncle William Sidney is at last brought to his senses; and, in order the more effectually to disentangle himself, having paid a good round sum for the release of his person, is come to town for the diversion of his mind.

Now, to me, nothing is so truly ridiculous as an old fellow in love. Two teeth and a half ornament one side of his mouth, a solitary grinder the other. But there is, I suppose, no resisting our destiny; and had not

you and I been caught in our youth, who knows what giddy steps we might have taken in the bloom of threescore? My mother (amiable woman as she is) seems to value herself not a little on the success of her expedition, but I am much of opinion, that if she had not tied the old Grecian to her apron string, until the pleasing folly subsides, she would, by his relapsing, have lost all the merits of her handy works as a rhetorician. He thinks your brother a phænomenon—qualified equally to shine in public or private life ;—but let me caution you not to exult too abundantly in his approbation, for so strangely is his heart made up, that it is quite as easily lost as won.

I am impatient to see this Charles, now that his arrival is hourly expected.—I wonder is he fatter or leaner than when he bid us adieu?—O! it was a most pathetic adieu, and I believe

believe made a lasting impression on your memory as well as mine.

As the men are all parliament-mad, it is more than probable Charles will be for sideling into the house—no matter how otherwise disqualified, as he will abound with rupees. But I will take care to clap a spoke in that wheel, for he shall not disoblige either of your self-willed relations, for reasons I will communicate at my leisure. So farewell, a thousand times farewell, my beloved Sophia! and believe me heaven will not yet forget to be gracious, and we shall all meet on happy ground.

I am, &c.

E. SIDNEY.

L E T T E R XV.

MISS FIELDING TO MISS SIDNEY.

TO prove to you, my sweet girl, how miserable a prophetess you are, I must inform you, all is over with Henry respecting my uncle's kindness; and he has now no other dependance left than the slight twig of court favour. I too am tumbled from my boasted height, and all this in consequence of a letter, the hand-writing of which, as well as the contents, is wholly unknown to me, but was brought by the same conveyance with your last most friendly epistle.

What can be done?—Unacquainted as I am with his offence, it is impossible for me even to attempt his exculpation. My orders are to tell him, that my uncle will neither receive any more of his letters, or continue
his

his accustomed pecuniary indulgence. This will be a severe stroke, as my father's circumstances are such as will not enable him to supply the deficiency. All I can pick out of him is, that Henry is a fool, a madman, and an apostate from patriotism, and that I abet him in his newly adopted principles:—that so far from intending he should ever accept a place, or eat the bread of the court parasites, it was merely his wish that he should see, that he might the more thoroughly despise it, untill he could have struck out some less ignoble provision for him.—Not content however with doing all his father's dirty work, that he has flown still wider from the path he ought to have pursued, and formed a connexion that has finally unconnected him with his uncle, and he must take the consequences.

This is the most cruelly perplexed skain I ever met with. My brother

has, I am convinced, very few general, and not one particular acquaintance out of your family.

His merit alone, I am proud to say it, can have created him enemies. I will not cease labouring to investigate the matter, until I have proved successful.

As to hoping for any clue from you, I know it would be only to deceive myself, and yet I was insensibly startled at your mention of Lord Ruleall's altered behaviour.

These courtiers, my dear, are finished actors, and never assume a new part but for some particular purpose. My brother's heart is unknowing in their tricks, and yet surely his good sense will be the guard of his simplicity, and save him alike from error and repentance.

The patriot, I am now informed, is expected, and my uncle, that he may the better take me in my own toils,
will

will not condescend to suspect me capable of a breach of promise. There however I think I may challenge my stars to do their worst—for my plan of operation is much too dexterously laid to fail of success. Have therefore, I beseech you, neither fears nor doubts on my account, but direct all your care and attention to the saving Henry from destruction.

Should he be induced to leave England, could I survive his departure? I who have not a friend or protector beyond him and you, and have from my cradle accustomed myself to look up to him, though only a few years older than myself, as my second father.

I have neither spirits nor leisure to do any thing more than congratulate you on your cousin's expected return, and may he with his wealth bring happiness to his family—but I think it is very unlikely your friend should ever see him more—Poverty and obscurity

will be her portion, whilst prosperity and the gaieties of life await him—But heaven knows I repine not at the reverse of our fortunes, yet must intreat you never to write so livelily on the subject—I mean with the peculiar liveliness which marks your letter now before me, and so ill suits the present gloomy habit of my soul.

I am, &c.

S. FIELDING.

LETTER XVI.

MISS SIDNEY TO MISS FIELDING.

I Conjure you, my dear girl, by all our long enjoyed friendship—by whatever you conceive most solemn and affecting—not to make your brother in the least degree acquainted with the illiberal caprices of that man
you

you will still continue to call your relation.

What—shall a soul like his be crushed by the discontinuance of a paltry stipend—and shall he, who deserves the first honours of existence, be compelled to sustain a life of servility and dependance?—Surely no—But that your imagination may not mislead you on this occasion, be informed that Charles Effingham, whose name you prohibit the mention of, is arrived—arrived the same generous and benevolent creature we once knew him, and declares he shall not enjoy himself or his possessions, unless permitted, until better days, to be your brother's banker. He will therefore in person wait upon the gentleman on whom your brother made his usual demands, and give him all due security for the utmost latitude of pecuniary accommodations your brother's convenience can require.—

Keep the secret then, my Sophia, if you love me, if you love yourself, or would not be suspected of being all profession, where your brother is concerned ; and as it is probable your uncle's resentment will prevent his opening any letters Henry may send, and that you are unable to intercept, the honest deception may be preserved so long as the necessity for it continues—Or suppose you tell him that from a change of humour (and God knows the old gentleman's capriciousness will give sufficient colour to the tale) he has forbid his writing for the present, will it not much better answer the desired purpose?—I leave it to your wisdom to determine, and your affection to adopt the most promising ways and means to prevent so important a secret transpiring—For need you be reminded that all the rhetoric of friendship, and the authority of love, would be insufficient to overturn a
point

point of supposed delicacy—such proud distinctions do the proud hearts of these men make where *meum* and *tuum* are the question.

Jewels, pearls, and all the luxuries of the east enrich Charles's collection. He has made my mother and me some princely presents, gratified the vanity of the old enamorado, and prevailed on Henry to wear a ring for his sake; nay more, is preparing a friendly offering for your acceptance.

Receive it I charge you, if you should even resolve not to call it a part of your possessions, until these heavy clouds in your domestic horizon are over-past—for I will consider it as an affront to myself, if his honest compliment is not duly honoured;—beware then of the sin of disobedience.

I, who as you know am pretty apt to let my vivacity run away with my discretion, must needs express my surprise at Effingham's returning to us a

bachelor. I will write you his reply *verbatim*, and leave you to make your own comments upon it.

It is far from extraordinary, my dear lively cousin, that a man whose heart never departed with him from England, could not be left behind in a foreign country—add to which, the natives are so uninformed, the adventuring ladies so disgusting, that had I been wholly free from prepossession, and was to have ended my days in India, I would have made one voyage for the purpose of choosing me a suitable consort in my own country, to answer my ideas of the amiable friend, the valuable wife, and the social companion—I had gained my point, and was perfectly satisfied.

But notwithstanding this little parade of prepossession, I took care to watch his looks when ever the lovely Fanny came in his way, and found them cold, though benevolent—abstracted,

tracted, though sensible—and have drawn my inferences accordingly.

The train of the *Middletown* election is now fixed—I mean as far as human conjecture reaches—and Mr. Stickler is the man—He has, it is plain, the general voice, and I should suppose must infallibly be the successful candidate—for such has been the conduct, and such notoriously are the measures of the court, that though tools and hirelings applaud, the honest part of the community are loud in their condemnation—It cannot, therefore, be within the nature of things, that they should obtain an honourable, much less an eligible opponent; and in my opinion they ought to make a virtue of necessity, and let the people carry their favourite point: for as *they* well know the insignificance of a single voice, that insignificance should, both in sound policy and in common justice,

be constituted the security, the tranquillity of the kingdom.

An interchange of letters has, for some time, your brother tells me, taken place between Lord Ruleall and your father, but I own I think there is little chance for a happy consequence to the latter.—To refuse a ministerial proposal, or impeach the propriety of a ministerial step, is high treason at the bar of the court, and at all times punished with unremitting severity.

Your brother has however been lucky in removing himself to a distance from your senseless family broils, and I yet hope will extricate himself from all his difficulties.

You shall hear again soon from

Your's, &c.

E. SIDNEY.

L E T T E R XVII.

MISS FIELDING TO MISS SIDNEY.

THIS tyrant court—but it must be impossible — My father is known, both by birth and education, to be a gentleman ; and therefore it can never be suspected that misfortunes, however severe, should warp his soul to base purposes, or render his faculties, of which the most wretched circumstances must still leave him master, subservient to the will of the betrayer. Was I a man, in matters of religion and politics I would presume to think for myself, though my life was the forfeit—Better say I to die with honour, than live with dishonour ; and if cast in a land where self-opinion was a crime, I should become wholly indifferent how soon I incurred the punishment.

Yet

Yet I cannot help hoping, that in all events we shall still find ourselves on the safe side of the question, though I thought quite otherwise when I saw the affair in a more remote point of view; for the fears of a bad man, when in the power of a second person, must prove the same security for his good behaviour, as the integrity of him who was never known to be unjust.

Yet on recollection I must correct myself; for such has been the daring of wicked men, when they could alone be exposed by a departure from character in the good, that they have committed the grossest outrages, and, as there was no other means of coming at them than the one abovementioned, committed them with impunity. But then may not this arise in a great measure from the vices of a sovereign? for when a master has put himself, by errors or crimes, into the
power

power of his servants, he is obliged to support them in all their villainous actions.

Here then, Emma, is consolation. His majesty now on the throne is almost a proverb for piety and mercy—two of the least deceitful marks of justice and benevolence—and my father cannot surely be undone either so silently, or so secretly, as for his misfortunes to escape the ear of royalty; nor can a king surely be so little acquainted with his friends, as to be unconscious that one is lost to him in the ruin of such a man as my father; and must it not naturally follow, that he will enquire into the cause, in order to ascertain his claims to consideration?

Ah, my dear dear girl, we are now come to an insuperable difficulty—for of whom can his majesty make enquiry but of his courtiers? and will not they make their own representations

sentations of a disaster that does them so little credit, and, instead of confessing that he banished himself to preserve his integrity inviolate, much rather insinuate that private demerits have rendered him unworthy their connexion? and instead of setting forth that his fortune has been spent in their service, and the service of the crown, basely impute the difficulties of his circumstances to his own extravagance? But if this is the only channel of information for princes, can they suppose they ever hear the truth?—Impossible—the crow will not beshrew its own nest. It should seem then incumbent on these fathers of a kingdom to constitute some fit instruments of intelligence, wholly unconnected with the business, and unconcerned in the consequences of public transactions. It is, according to my idea, a strange, an unmanly deficiency: for why should kings, of all creatures in existence, knowingly
be

be abused in points so essential to their knowledge, their honour, &c.

Here then my scheme steps in to my relief—His majesty shall receive a true state of his poor undone subject's case, and should he even conceive that some abatements, some allowances are necessary in the partiality of a daughter, he will still perceive the father a fit object of his princely consideration. I will puzzle the point no longer, all unable as I feel myself to clear it; for when kings do not accustom themselves to use their own organs for the purpose of information, what can be beyond the reach of ministerial wiles, and ministerial misrepresentation?

What account does your cousin Charles give of India affairs?—Does he bear testimony to the barbarity of his countrymen?—Can he, does he say that Englishmen and Christians cut the throats of thousands of equally harmless

harmless and defenceless individuals to enrich themselves with the spoils? —Forbid it honour, and forbid it humanity! —I read the horrid accounts our news-papers contain of these infernal massacres, with the secret hope that either malice, or error, has aggravated common incidents into such turpitude of transgression. —I am however, for the reputation and peace of mind of your family, glad that Mr. Effingham is free from the remotest share in the charge, as the rupees which you mention him to have imported, were all obtained in the still life of commercial intercourse.

I durst not live in the house with the fine things he has been so generous as to send me, if I could conceive them torn from the persons of those unhappy wretches his own hand had butchered, or purchased at the unworthy price of his faith or his humanity.

Do

Do you not, my dear Emma, turn the head aside if approached by any of those ladies who blaze in diamonds thus dipped (as I may say) in blood, and only so many sparkling evidences of murder and slaughter?

Upon this occasion it is impossible to call me over-nice. I know, indeed, that in all nations, and at all periods, the treasures of the enemy have been deemed the lawful prize of the conqueror—but then they stood upon equal ground, and had the same chance on each side of being so enriched—Whereas in India, if the accounts received are not diabolical fables, the poor inhabitants of cities have been cut in pieces by the soldiery, against whom they neither could defend themselves, nor had committed offence—O horror, horror! —But send me, I beseech you, your cousin's relation of facts, and if possible

possible reconcile me to my own species.

I am, &c.

S. FIELDING.

LETTER XVIII.

MISS SIDNEY TO MISS FIELDING.

LORD, how I pity you, with your blood and murder! what a collection of hard words have you made use of, in speaking of a most natural and common event!

So then, you would have soldiers be soldiers for nothing; and when they find themselves in a land of gold, with no other bar to the possession of it than the lives of a parcel of infidels—people moreover, who, from not being of the same complexion, can never have a single claim to humanity

manity—not slaughter hecatombs of them, and glory in the successful exercise of their arms? How did I laugh at your simplicity! for you must understand it is a rule with us fine ladies to laugh at the bare mention of humanity—Why child, the women themselves, the wives, &c. of these spirited soldiers, would with a broad sword cut you down some half dozen Indian wretches of their own sex in the course of a day, who have knelt at their feet, and in order to excite their compassion, held their two and two helpless infants in each hand.—But Charles shall tell you all, in an epistle for the purpose, filled with nothing but the glorious exploits of our arms, and the consequential honours of our commanders.

Why, Sophia, our merciful king makes lords of those who have slaughtered their *quantum* of fellow creatures—nor do any people receive a
more

more gracious reception with our amiable queen than the ladies, at whose approach you can expect me to turn aside the head.

Come, come, my friend—it is full time you should shake off these rusticities, and, as a means of breaking you in, I will get Charles to borrow a certain nobleman's sword, which he himself exultingly declares has slain its thousands and its tens of thousands in the service of his country.

Ah! well may these conquerors love the king—he is so generous and so un-enquiring upon all these occasions—for would you believe it, though all this havock is made in his name, or at least with his toleration, instead of claiming his participation of the golden harvest, he leaves these his subjects to roll in the treasures of the East, and stamps them right honour-
able

able and right noble into the bargain.

Effingham is indeed as great a fool as yourself, and will tell you many a tale with a tear starting to his eye, and a voice scarcely articulate—a chicken hearted puppy! when he might have joined these continental heroes, and have decorated us with the trophies of his victories. He might then have said, spreading out the gems before our delighted eyes, This I pulled from the nose of a woman, as I flew her in the arms of her husband—this I cut from the hand of a daughter, as she extended it over her aged father's head in order to defend him from the uplifted stroke—this was torn from the ear of an infant; nay, if you take the trouble to examine it you will discover a bit of the ear yet sticks to the pearl—But no such thing—his pusillanimous soul

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descended

descended to traffic for what his sword might have obtained him—Therefore, when you and I are drawn forth the most splendidly, we must not attempt to out-shine any thing but a paltry lady mayoress, who is the representative of commercial majesty.

You see then how much you have to unlearn before you can be one of us: for though we British-dwelling females do not distinguish ourselves in a similar manner with those who visit foreign climes; yet, as a proof that we have a like bloody spirit, as you would call it, within us, we are wholly regardless how many brothers, husbands, or lovers are set together by the ears, either in the justification of our indiscretions, or gratification of our vanity.—But, indeed, it is observable, that in proportion as we make these large strides towards heroism, the gentlemen have renounced the conduct of heroes: the custom of
wagers

wagers is the happy succedaneum, and prevents innumerable quarrels—the drained purse saving the body from many a severe pinking.

I myself, Sophia, was once present at a monstrous dispute, and began to be very seriously alarmed for the consequences—when lo ! in the moment I expected swords to be brandished, and death to ensue, out came the purses, and the matter was left in peaceable suspension, until the possible period should arrive for its no less peaceable decision. This is life and spirit, and matters that I own you must have a very inadequate idea of; but time, my dear, and a journey to this city, will cure the defect. You had best think of Charles yourself, as, take my word for it, he will never be a fit husband for any other woman. But you shall hear—

Sitting in the parlour the other morning, after the good family had

dispersed themselves from the breakfast-table, one of the servants came in and enquired if Mr. Effingham was not there.

I replied he was gone to the Royal-Exchange; but who wants him?—A woman, Madam—a woman repeated I (not without having my private opinion on the occasion), pray let the person know, that if it is agreeable to leave her business with me, I will take care to make my cousin acquainted with it. A tight, clean, elderly woman was immediately shewn in.

I should not, Madam, said she, have troubled you, but for fear Mr. Effingham should think me neglectful of his orders—but if you will do me the honour to hear me, I will tell you all.—I insisted upon her being seated, for I perceived she was weary, and she began as follows:

Mr.

Mr. Effingham, Madam, has for many weeks past been a father to the fatherless, and a comforter to the heart of the widow. My poor and only son, in his passage from India, aboard the same ship with Mr. Effingham, was hurried by wrong orders up to the top-mast, from whence by some mismanagement he fell on the deck, and broke both his legs.—In short, Madam, (wiping away the tears that poured down her honest cheeks) they were fain to be both of them taken off! when, instead of groaning at his own sufferings, he kept lamenting for his poor wife, mother, and five small children, who, he said, would be reduced to want a morsel of bread. Mr. Effingham begged him to be comforted, took down our names, and where to find us, and assured him, that if he lived, he should see his family was not friendless, for that he would provide

for them, and if he died they should never feel the loss of his labours for them.—He died, Madam, and Mr. Effingham has been as good as his word—My daughter and her children are placed in a little neat house by Brumpton, and her eldest boy, who was seven years old yesterday, is to be put into some great school, and I am now come to town to take orders about it.

What age is your daughter? — Near seven and twenty, Madam, and as likely a young woman as you would see in a thousand;—but I know not why—Mr. Effingham would never let her wait upon him.—He says, he is better satisfied to hear from me that she and her children are well; and so having no opportunity to thank, she can only bless and pray for her benefactor.

Well, good woman, said I, if you can be secret, though he won't come
and

and see her, I will.—So saying I sent her away, beyond measure happy, with a few trifling presents for her grand-children. Next morning curiosity and a hackney-coach carried me and my Fanny to Brumpton—Likely indeed! she is one of the prettiest delicate creatures I ever saw, and her children are all like so many cherubs.

It seems her husband was nearly as handsome as herself; but being married very young, and meeting with many misfortunes, he resolved to leave her, and try whether, by a little venture and good behaviour, he could not obtain sufficient in an East India voyage to set them up in a little way of business.—The wife I am persuaded could not have lived in a shop in this vicious town, and so, my dear, except the loss of a tender husband, things are much better as they are.

How I will rally this modern Scipio for his self-denial!—He heard she was beautiful I suppose, and fearful of his integrity, he would not see the object he was resolved to protect—or perhaps from a refinement known to few, apprehended that the voice of scandal, if it transpired that he once had seen her, would imbitter the morsel of benevolence.—I could almost love him myself for his generous and sensible conduct.—The poor old good soul is so far from seeing this circumstance in its amiable light, that, instead of the noble violence he does his curiosity, she conceives him actuated by pride, or at best a strange peculiarity of disposition;—but I doubt not this article will have all its merit with you, without my dwelling longer upon it.

Scipio did I say?—what was Scipio's action to this of our friend?—His fair captive he knew was engaged

gaged to another—Fame indeed spoke largely of her beauty; but as her engagement stood between him and every honourable overture, he thought proper to spare his own feelings, having resolved to act as became his character—Whereas Charles had no bar to the indulgence of his eyes, but genuine delicacy, and genuine benevolence—The disparity of their conditions (leaving even his acknowledged pre-engagement out of the question) making it impossible for him to see her with any better consequences than exposing the reality of his charity to suspicion, and furnishing a kind of probability that slander did not place things to a wrong, when placing them to a dishonest account.

You must love the fellow, Sophia—for it is a queer fellow, and much more like you in manners and sentiments than even your own brother.

When I told Charles of my visit to Brumpton, he appeared quite out of countenance; that is, as Pope says, having done good by stealth, he blushed to find it fame.—I was lavish in my praises of the young widow's person, and congratulated him on his resolution of never beholding her, as there might be danger in the interview—He smiled, and I assure you with conscious superiority, upon me, and, content with the testimony of his own heart to the propriety of his conduct, appeared wholly indifferent as to my opinion of it. His little boy (for I call all the children his, and are they not, Sophia, the children of his humanity?) was this morning put into Christ's-Hospital—a school, my dear, erected by one of the Henry's, and if I mistake not endowed by Cardinal Woolsey; where lads are not only charitably, but liberally educated, and
from

from whence many of our great men both in church and state have originated.

You may, not improperly I think, call this the history of Mr. Effingham—a history that I would recommend to you to lay on your pillow, that, reading it over every morning fasting, you may receive due impressions of the hero's merit, and honour him accordingly.

I am, &c. &c.

E. SIDNEY.

L E T T E R X I X .

MISS FIELDING TO MISS SIDNEY.

MY father is set off for London, and my heart is strangely alarmed—for, Emma, I dread his necessities, and the eloquence of his patron.—He has as yet hurt no one but himself; for highly imprudent as it may be, the most rigid judgment cannot make it criminal to dispose of what is our own.—If he falls into any ministerial trap, his reason, or his life, I am convinced will be the forfeit; for heroically soever as he may sustain poverty, his soul could never endure shame, and I must tremble for the consequences. Should he therefore resolve so far to put his head into the lion's mouth, as to venture an interview with Lord Ruleall, I beseech you to enjoin my brother to accompany him—Tell him

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him he knows not half the weakness of human nature, nor half the wickedness of a court; and that it is our common, our everlasting safety, that now demands his superintendency.

I write this much rather to you than Henry, because though it may be possible for a letter to be run lightly over, your injunctions will have a happy effect upon him, and avert the impending misery of

Your anxious friend,

S. FIELDING.

L E T-

L E T T E R XX.

MR. FIELDING TO MISS FIELDING.

OUR father, my dear sister, has had his last audience of Lord Ruleall, and they have parted on barely civil terms. His proposal was an insulting one.

It seems our glorious administration, though they wanted the courage to carry the laws into execution, are beyond measure bold when they are to be violated.

Mr. Stickler, in a manner I believe forgotten by the heads of his party, found his exile a very ineligible situation. A noble friend was got into office, and though there was no bringing him to terms by a literary application, he could not conceive but a personal one would answer his wishes.

Thus

Thus it is plain, that his first thoughts on revisiting his native country were to repair his shattered finances by some government appointment— notwithstanding I am unable to see how his patriotism was to be conserved, if his pecuniary purposes had been answered.

My Lord Duke was, however, too happily disciplined in the court trammels not to know all his paces; he therefore, with that species of effrontery which distinguishes the forehead of a minister from that of any other man, sunk the acquaintance, and assumed the deportment of a man of fashion.—Now treading his native soil, and thus frustrated in his best hopes by the desertion of his patron, nothing was left for him, but to throw himself into the arms of popularity: and to his eternal honour as a man, and his exemplary merit as a partizan, I speak it, though
in

in a state of enmity with his quondam allies, and though provoked to the highest pitch of resentment, he has not divulged a single secret; or betrayed a single trust of patriotism confided to him.

The first city in England invited him to take its representation upon him—and during the whole time that he went about canvassing, though obnoxious to the laws of his country, and a thorn in the side of the men in power, the ministry looked tamely on, and suffered him to proceed without either let or molestation.

But though the ministry were so kind as to leave his steps unrestrained, they are strenuously labouring to counterwork them. They feared for their safety, if they clapped a condemned individual into prison, but are fearless when striking at the basis of the constitutional rights of this kingdom.

In this their daring and wicked scheme, they marked my father down as a no less fit than obtainable instrument; he was not only to offer himself a candidate, but let the election go on as it may, in defiance of the people's suffrages, the privileges of the community, and the laws of the British constitution, by a stretch of court power, enter the House of Commons, claim and maintain his seat, though possessing the minority of votes, as if duly elected.

My father spurn'd the idea—Your plan, said he, my Lord, is as impracticable as it is base (I have acquired by this indignity a right to speak freely of it.)—The people of England are not to be fooled—Not a stone of the House of Commons walls would be left one on the other, before they would behold their privileges, their just, their fundamental privileges so grossly violated.—I wish your Lordship joy of the expedient,

pedient, but believe me, if victory is the end, you have strangely mistaken the means—It will be no longer the cause of Mr. Stickler, it will be the cause of each individual who bears the name of Englishman, and has either a head to comprehend the evil, or an arm to oppose it; and, as a friend, I would advise you to drop so dangerous, and so unpromising a measure.

You will recollect, Sir, said Lord Ruleall, with a malicious smile, it was your assistance, not your advice that was asked on this occasion; and therefore, if I have received your final resolution, our conference naturally terminates—The lawless conduct of the people justifies the manœuvre, however unconstitutional—but I beg your pardon, Sir, I took you for a friend to good order; I find you the advocate of anarchy and rebellion.—We bowed and retired.

Leave

Leave me, Henry, said my father : after having been the witness of my disgrace, I cannot bear you should look upon me—I will not be a villain—I will have vengeance.

Alas ! Sir, why drive your child, your loved Henry, from you?—Your integrity has been preserved—I have seen the triumph of honesty ; and, instead of dejection on your part, or mortification on mine, we ought to exult in the choice you have made, to glory in the sacrifices you have offered up on the shrine of probity.

O ! that is a blessed thought—there is safety, Henry, in that thought—But then, my child, we are ruined—I have not a foot of land unmortgaged, and must never more return to my patrimonial mansion—Your sister—how shall I ever behold her ?—Your uncle—he will heap affliction on affliction ; and as to your hopes, they are all most cruelly blasted—
And

And can you yet love virtue?—
You must starve, my son, if you can
dare to be virtuous.

Forgive me, Sir; but thus, thus
to embrace you, is more pleasing to
my soul, than to have beheld your
brows encircled with the diadem of
infamy. I came to London deter-
mined never to barter my principles
for the smiles of a placeman, and
my success has shewn how little is to
be obtained by honest means—But,
believe me, there is still a way open
for us both—I have a young friend
that will take pleasure in supporting
the spirits of my father; we will seek
him out, and pass the evening toge-
ther.—With much difficulty I at
length prevailed upon him to leave
the future conduct of our lives to
me—and by degrees the formidable
wildness that sat on every feature in
his countenance, and made me ap-
prehend his reason in danger, sub-
sided

TO MISS FIELDING. 213

ded into a kind of melancholy resignation—Charles soon joined us, and the night passed off beyond my most flattering expectations.—I can add no more at present, but that

I am, &c.

H. FIELDING,

L E T.

L E T T E R X X I .

MISS FIELDING TO MR. FIELDING.

BAD news, on the wings of malevolence, soon find a passage to the remotest situations. My father's disgrace, or what fame calls his rupture with the ministry, has determined his fate—The house of our nativity, which was late the scene of hospitality and revel, is now opened for a public sale of its furniture, and my uncle takes an active part in the business, declaring he rejoices to see one court fool made a public example. How my heart bleeds!—It is impossible to give you an idea—may I not be permitted to fly this unnatural roof, and partake, perhaps soften, the distress of my father's

TO MR. FIELDING. 215

ther's circumstances? But I will obey your instructions—my female weakness shall not shrink from the necessary evil—Assist me then with your advice, though unable to afford me personal protection, and spare, to the utmost of your power, the heart of

My dear brother's, &c.

SOPHIA FIELDING.

L E T.

L E T T E R XXII.

MISS SIDNEY TO MISS FIELDING.

THEY may well say no creature is so insignificant as not to have the power, on one occasion or other, of annoying. This fop, would you suspect such a thing, has gained over the antiquated lover to his party, and I am so pestered between them, that it is past all endurance.

My uncle, kind soul, professes himself his advocate from sympathy—He can remember the anguish of a tender passion, and most sincerely pity those that are smarting under its influence.—I told you so—To-day he is for you, to-morrow against you—and how ridiculous the old fellow makes himself I leave you to judge.

I hap-

I happened to step in upon them a few hours ago rather abruptly—and lo! there they were in a poetical tete-a-tete, assisting each other with chiming expressions, as Nancy and fancy, and love and dove, grieve, believe, &c. &c. They intreated me to participate their amusement, but I fled from them as from a couple of monkeys, in the course of whose tricks I was apprehensive they would lay their paws on me.

My uncle muttered somewhat of perverse huffy, whilst my swain lisped out, lively creature!—It would have been a sin to have separated them, or proved an interruption to their rational entertainment.

I can foresee, however, that the old dotard will be sufficiently punished for his absurdity: for, as tender minds are wonderfully agitated by tender things, we shall have him relapsing into that malady, out of

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which my mother's rhetoric so recently delivered him—nor should I wonder if an elopement was to be the consequence. It is pleasant enough, now I know my men, to see this fopling's behaviour to your brother.

When Mr. Fielding is absent no jackanapes was ever so full of tricks, but the moment Mr. Fielding appears he is quite crest-fallen.—He does indeed now and then venture to glance a severe thing at his rival, but then it is so obliquely as to be almost as applicable to any other gentleman (provided there is another in company) and your brother never fails to mortify him by appearing not in the least to understand him. If we go to a public place, I frequently give him my hand, as I would give it to any other tame animal, and consider his affected raptures as so many fawning tricks natural to the dumb creature.—His features are rather unfortunately cast (but I have
not

not time to give you a description of him) yet is he ever calling up what he conceives to be tender looks, which amount to little more than a grin, and a distortion nearly resembling a poor fellow creature, as pictured in an operator's window, under a tooth-drawer's hands.—But you must see him, when we will laugh sufficiently at his expence to be amply revenged. Yet this is the man, my dear, that was to cut his rival's throat—the vain boaster!—But let me tell you one of his capital manœuvres: perceiving that the lovely Fanny was treated by the whole family with suitable distinction, he imagined it might be useful to win her to his interest; for which purpose he was continually offering her tickets for public places; these she civilly declined accepting: he then was for presenting her with ribbons, gloves, tooth-pick cases, and a thousand baubles; nor was he a

not more successful—At length what does he? — why, tenders her a purse of gold, believing that must be irresistible—Fanny, however, held fast her integrity; but he persisting most manfully to press her, she was at length betrayed into a scornful manner of rejection, that hurt his pride, shocked his self-love, and has fixed him her mortal enemy.—I thought it necessary, just to give him a hint that no impertinence could be practised there with impunity—he smiled with contempt, but has hitherto kept within tolerable bounds. My uncle tells me, I am as barbarous as the Amazons, and that he verily believes I could head a regiment in the hour of battle undismayed—It is very likely, Sir, for I would much sooner fall before the mouth of a cannon, than suffer the ignoble death I am threatened with—As what—From the chattering

tering of fops.—You will perceive this is wit in our way.

But a-propos, you must come to London and learn to conjure. I have taken two lessons, but have not the requisites for shining in the black art, and so recommend it to you to become a candidate for public favour.—You do not understand me—read then the unfolding of my meaning.

Parties of the wisest and first people in the kingdom assemble whole hours for the purpose of being entertained by a man who professes himself a conjurer, but it is, in fact, the dullest of all human animals. So far from being blessed with the eloquence of a Cicero, or a Demosthenes, your ear is continually saluted with
“ now gentlemen and ladies you
“ shall see de most curious trick that
“ ever vas shewn—I will tell any
“ lady what hour she tink she will
“ get up in the morning—and I
L 3 “ will

“ will give a hundred pounds to any
“ man that will do as much to the
“ satisfaction of the company.” Need
I observe his execution answers the
expectations his promises excite—
but then you contrive to kill an
hour, mix with the best company,
and prove yourself a woman of spirit.
The opera has been visited by me;
and oh! the raptures that the recita-
tive occasions the heart of a woman of
taste—especially (which happens to be
my case) if she does not understand
one syllable of the matter. I wish
you to learn Italian; it is so elegant a
language to scold in, and so perfect-
ly in nature, particularly with accom-
paniment, that the ear is no less de-
lighted with the jargon of their he-
roines, than the eye with the paste-
board faringales of these stage heroes.
But I forfeited a whole afternoon’s
reputation in the best company, by
declaring that I was more agreeably
amused

amused in Westminster abbey, than by either conjurer or opera, however the *ton* in these polite days. The poets, my dear, as well as other great and venerable personages, are all characteristically commemorated in the Abbey. I intend to send a whole epistle of tomb reflections, which you may depend upon finding new and surprising.—But let it in the mean time suffice, that I profess to you, it beyond measure moves my wonder that those who are at the great expence of thus celebrating, I might say perpetuating, the memory of their friends, do not prevail upon themselves to add a little annual stipend to preserve the monuments from the crusts of dust they so speedily contract, to the total destruction of their beautiful polish—But these things are between ourselves, for I should be thought equally absurd and presuming, to impeach the conduct of my ancestors,

and sit in judgment on the humours of my cotemporaries—And thus conclude my public observations.

Charles, your brother, and I, when we can snatch a moment from the noise and impertinence of the world, enter largely into the merits of all these matters; and so much satisfaction do we communicate and receive on these occasions, that it is a settled point with us, that no triumvirate, either past, present, or to come, can be so wise, or critically just as we.

My uncle has bespoke a new pair of Morocco slippers, so we shall have one beau at least in our family—but that is only half his finery—for, would you think it? he is furnished with a fatten gown for his adornment, in which he struts, talks politics, takes snuff, and conceives himself a very clever fellow.—But self-opinion amounts to little, if we have only that prop to our vanity—and I
own

own I pick a lesson of instruction out of him whenever I look that way.

I am not in the humour to write serious things, and shall therefore avoid speaking of your relations; and yet, though your uncle and father are either such *outré* characters as to deserve silent contempt, or so mischievous as to throw one into tremors, your poor amiable aunt ought not to be forgotten—What a memento her condition to your beauties! what a humiliation to your wits!—In short as Pope says,

Call round her bed each object of desire,
Each purer frame inform'd with purer fire,
Bid her be all that cheers and softens life,
The tender sister, daughter, friend, and wife.
Bid her be all that makes mankind adore,
Then view that woman and be vain no more.

But whatever efficacy such objects are of in the still void of rustic life, they would be wholly disregarded in

this noisy world, where death itself admonishes in vain.—A youth of frolic, and an old age of cards, limits the ideas and bounds the ambition of each individual—and such shrivelled hands as often appear on the table make me philosophize on the very point of obtaining a *sans prendre*, and on the very verge of being *codilled*.

Your brother exclaims loudly against this unsocial mode of amusement, as he calls it; as if there was neither pleasure nor meaning in children of six feet high spending the greatest part of their days in sorting and circulating a parcel of black and red spots—But I shall become an absolute cynic, if I do not hastily quit this subject.—Your brother and father are well—and I am bid to inform you, that the dear self-destroyer (these are the words, and you will not be at a loss to understand them) is prevailed

prevailed upon to hope, though in defiance of probability. The young candidate for Piddleton is now preparing himself to take holy orders—He is to visit us to-morrow; but I foresee little use in the connexion; however, I cannot set my face against it, as the wise ones will think otherwise, whilst I shall alone behold him as the source of new insults and new disappointments.

I am, &c.

E. SIDNEY.

L E T T E R XXIII.

MISS FIELDING TO MISS SIDNEY.

MISERABLE wretch that I am, to be a spectator of the ruin of my family, without the power of averting it, or the means of mitigating it! no not if even consenting to sacrifice my everlasting peace—for my uncle has only his own gratification at heart in the proposed match, and would not accept my compliance, as the price of my father or brother's happiness. The patriot is arrived, and, contrary to my hopes, will not relinquish the lady; but I flatter myself there is more of artifice than determination in his present conduct; for, having a very tolerable opinion of himself, he finds it difficult to believe he is beheld with distaste; and as our sex are not celebrated for the power, or the custom

custom of keeping secrets, he may be fearful I should betray him, if he took me at my word. My uncle is in high spirits, and poor Henry totally forgotten. If I am a good girl, all his fortune is to be secured to me ; but I am to become an out-cast in case of disobedience.—So be it, I say with all my heart—I will never play the legal prostitute, and now only wait the final decision of the court, with respect to my father, to decide finally my future steps. Your letter of information, and your cousin's magnificent present, reached me in the same instant ; but I suppose it was so intended, in order to engage my acceptance. Well may you observe how useless such ornaments must prove in my present situation, for they are indeed much fitter for a queen than a private gentlewoman. Not choosing to trust them in this house, uncertain as it now is how long I may
continue

continue there, I have prevailed on Mr. Granville to take charge of them, and shall never resume my possession, unless under happier auspices.

There is but one thing against me in my uncle's matrimonial plan, and that is the natural perverseness of mankind.—Many, my dear, we have heard and read, have fancied themselves attached to an object merely from its unattainableness, and if this patriot should unfortunately persist in his attachment to me, it will be on those most glorious of motives.—I am not dexterous at dissembling, nor have I the address to develope the spring of action in those I have to deal with, except when as genuine and as generous as in the hearts of some half dozen persons I could mention—I must therefore wait the unravelling of the plot with all possible patience. Mr. Graham's figure is very plain,
5 and

and his conversation as disagreeable as you can imagine, from abounding with patriotic quibbles and stale reflections—He talks, however, of no one thing but politics, and if you attempt to start another subject, it is evident that you are leading him out of his depth—that by the laws of complaisance you are obliged to return to the renounced topic.

I asked him a question or two about the court—

Do you mean the individuals, said he, or the manners?

I answered—the latter.

Then, my dear Madam, you have applied to quite a wrong person for information: I love my country too well to hold other intercourse with its enemies, than living under the same climate.

The queen, Sir, is allowed by all parties to be a most amiable woman.

I beg your pardon, Madam, German pride never did good to England;
and

and that she has imported a characteristic quantity, I am well informed by those who are sufferers under its exertion.

Suffering are always prejudiced persons; we ought therefore, Sir, I must conceive, to make many abatements in consideration of that circumstance.

By heaven, I am of quite a different opinion; for to me suffering is the criterion of all public judgment.

But, Sir, you must give me leave to observe, that the cause ought to determine the effect.

How—if we suffer, do we not suffer?

But is there no distinction in suffering by the fault of others, and from our own fault?—The former, I grant you, gives us the right of complaint; but whatever may be our situation, the latter must seal up our lips, unless we would aggravate our own condemnation.

Ah!

Ah! Madam, Madam, this doctrine is too strongly tainted by the court principles, not to mark its origin; and I fear your uncle will yet live to lament the *double* education you have received.

I wish, Sir, when you would be understood to either compassionate, or compliment my uncle, you would contrive to do it at some less respectable person's expence than my father's. I have all proper duty and affection for your friend, but can never divest myself of nature—Thus you see, Sir, what you have to apprehend in the planned alliance—You would ever more blush for the folly of your wife, and she would shudder at the severe temper of her husband.—

But, my dear Madam, you are Scripture-read, and your uncle assures me pious even to superstition; you cannot, therefore, fail to make due distinctions between parental and conjugal

jugal attachment; and subscribing to the maxim in the text, of quitting father and mother and so forth, to cleave to your husband, fulfil all our desires.

There is an inconsistency in your character (I will speak plain) that shocks me; your language is the language of liberty, your ideas those of tyranny—I by no means wish you to disoblige my uncle, but if you regard your peace of mind, your honour, or your fame, I must tell you, you will diligently avoid an union that will strike at all those valuable articles.

O! you never was so mistaken, Madam; the party tenets of my brother or my friend, would reflect honour or dishonour upon me; but for the ladies, our daughters, sisters, wives, their power is as circumscribed as their judgement is limited, and we cannot fear, or be disturbed, when they are concerned.

A pretty

A pretty lover-like compliment—but I constrain myself—and will leave you to your destiny.

You can, Emma, have no notion of the bloody work the ensuing election will produce—The parliament house, Mr. Graham tells me, will be pulled down to the ground, unless Mr. Stickler has a seat in it, and fire and sword destroy all his enemies, the enemies of the constitution—But these big talkers, as my brother observes, are generally the least doers; so that in all probability, our giant patriots will be found mere pigmies in the community—I am, however, in all events, a most sincere well-wisher to the real good of the kingdom. I have, my dear, a favour to solicit at your hands—for though my uncle can hold himself so loose to the distress of his brother and nephew, must I not feel sensibly for my brother and father? I have
a few

a few ornaments that were my mother's, and God knows wholly useless under my present circumstances—Will you assist me in the disposal of them, and so employ the little produce as may best prove an accommodation to my beloved relations? I know how they would be affected by a knowledge of this business, too well not to spare them on the occasion: my secret is therefore deposited, where it must for ever be safe, in the bosom of a faithful and affectionate friend.—The patriot begs to speak with me—what can he want?—But as I know suspense will be to the full as troublesome to you as myself, I will not dispatch this letter till I can inform you.

Little did, little indeed could I imagine the purpose for which I was sent for. In the great parlour sat my lover, an open letter in his hand,
in

in a deep reverie—He hastily arose, and begging me to be seated, told me he hoped he had a proposal now to make, that would be perfectly agreeable—Your father, Madam, I find is undone; I am a stranger to his misfortunes, but as Lord Ruleall is the author of them, I am persuaded they might be played off to advantage; he would prove a glorious instrument against the court, if in proper hands; will you then consent to sound him at a distance, and give me private intimation of your success—as it is very possible I may turn my designs from the daughter to the father, and sacrifice my love, as I have repeatedly done my interest, in the public cause?

You are now, my dear Emma, possessed of my secret and honourable commission, and will treat with the gentleman in *our* name.

Yet

Yet, if it is unjustifiable in one party to change sides, it surely cannot be very honourable in the other; and as I have heard my father largely condemn the apostate patriot, I trust he will be so uniform as to despise a similar conduct in a courtier—for it is observable on all these occasions, that however the treason may be loved, the traitor is barely tolerated—But I ought not to anticipate my father's judgement in a point that so nearly concerns him to make a prudent determination.

I think I am pretty safe now with respect to my patriot; for I well know, that besides the natural antipathy my uncle has to every dealing with courtiers, he would consider this tampering with the niece, whilst under the uncle's roof, as a breach both of honour and hospitality. If his views were fair, why not much rather seek his friend's concurrence, than

than proceed clandestinely?—It is, however, one of the many cases that will not admit of reasoning, and the event must decide its good or bad policy.—If you love me, do not fail writing by the return of the post, to

Yours, &c.

S. FIELDING.

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St. Paul, Mo.

The End of Vol. I.